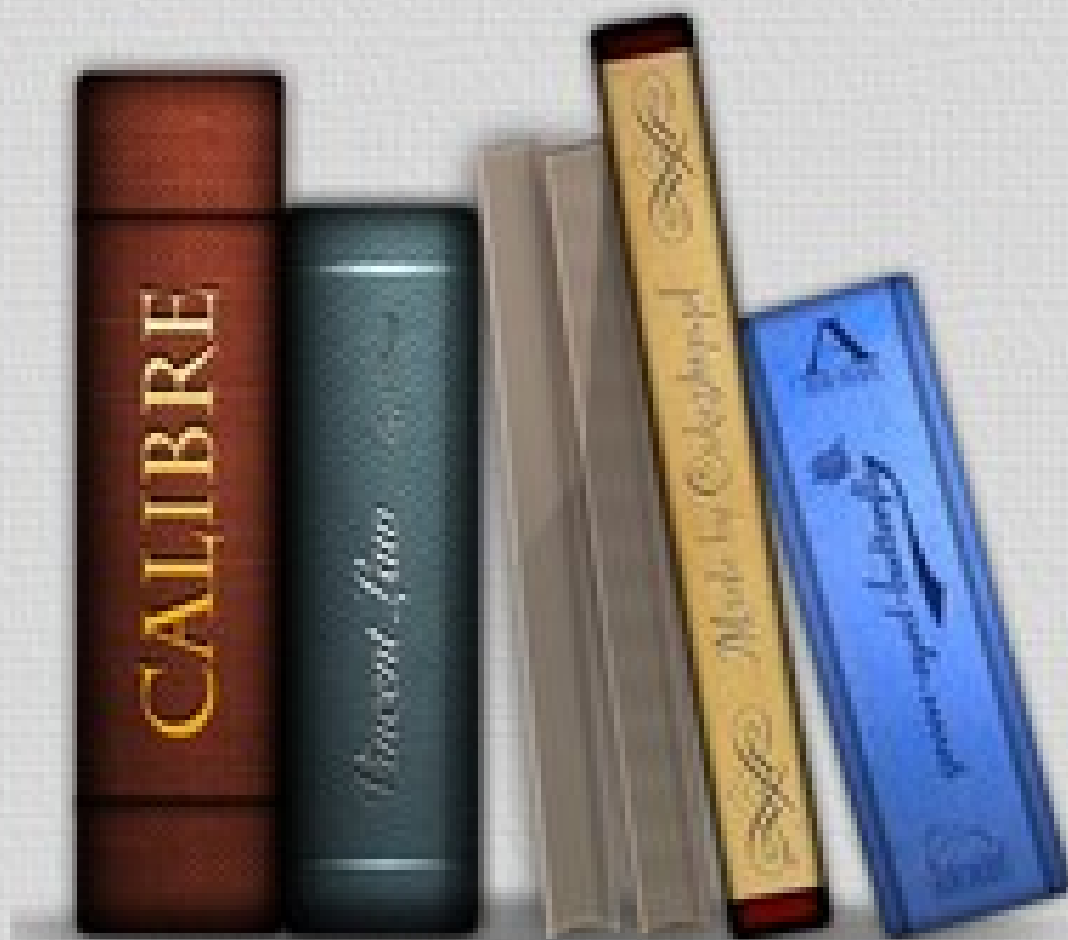


DGuzik 05 Deuteronomy

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This is what Moses said to the assembly of Israel in the Transjordanian wastelands, the arid country opposite Suph, between Paran and Tophel, Laban, Hazeroth, and Di Zahab

Guzik - Deuteronomy 1:1-46

Deuteronomy 1 - Moses Remembers the Journey of Israel from Mount Sinai to Kadesh Barnea

A. Introduction; Moses remembers the departure from Mount Sinai (Horeb).

1. (1) **These are the words . . .**

These *are* the words which Moses spoke to all Israel on this side of the Jordan in the wilderness, in the plain opposite Suph, between Paran, Tophel, Laban, Hazeroth, and Dizahab.

a. **On this side of the Jordan:** At this point Israel was camped on the great plains of Moab, able to see across the Jordan River into the Promised Land. This was the land of Canaan

that God promised them but which they had not occupied for 400 years.

b. **In the wilderness:** They had come through a long, and difficult journey from Egypt - made all the more long and difficult because of their unbelief and the death of the adult generation which first came out of Egypt.

c. **These are the words which Moses spoke to all Israel:** At this pivotal point in Israel's history - on the threshold of the Promised Land, and ready to adopt a true national identity, Moses spoke to Israel in this book of Deuteronomy.

i. The name *Deuteronomy* means "second law." It was the second giving of the Mosaic Law, the first being at Mount Sinai. Moses felt compelled to bring this reminder of the Law to Israel, because those ready to enter the Promised Land were only children - if born at all - when the Law was originally

given at Mount Sinai.

d. **Which Moses spoke to all Israel:** Essentially, the Book of Deuteronomy was a sermon - or a series of sermons, preached by Moses to Israel, and preached with a heavy and passionate heart.

i. Moses' heart was heavy because he knew that he would not enter the Promised Land of Canaan with Israel. His disobedience to God at Meribah (Num. 20:1-13) meant that he would not see Israel's exodus from Egypt through to completion.

ii. Moses' heart was passionate because he knew that if this new generation - a generation of faith, unlike the generation which perished in the wilderness - if this new generation did not obey the Law of God, then God's covenant would work against them and curse them. So the LORD passionately pled through a passionate Moses in Deuteronomy, pleading for Israel to *choose life!* (Deu. 30:19) iii. Deuteronomy is therefore a book of reminding and a book of preparation. We never outgrow our need to be reminded, as Peter said, *I will not be negligent to remind you always of these things, though you know and are established in the present truth.* (2Pe. 1:12)

e. **Moses spoke to all Israel . . . in the wilderness:** Deuteronomy is also a book of note, because it was a useful book of reminder and preparation for Jesus. In His temptation in the wilderness, it seems obvious that Jesus meditated on Deuteronomy because in answering Satan, He quoted from it three times. Deuteronomy was a precious book to Jesus and it was used to prepare Him to be used of God. We should not think any less of it.

- i. When tempted by Satan to use His divine powers to turn stone into bread, Jesus answered Satan from Deu. 8:3: *man shall not live by bread alone; but man lives by every word that proceeds from the mouth of the Lord.*
- ii. When tempted by Satan to tempt God the Father into demonstrating Jesus as Messiah before it was time, Jesus answered Satan from Deu. 6:16: *You shall not tempt the Lord your God.*
- iii. When tempted by Satan to short-cut the cross by bowing down to worship the devil, Jesus answered Satan from Deu. 6:13: *You shall fear the Lord your God and serve Him.*
- iv. "Deuteronomy is one of the greatest books of the Old Testament. Its influence on the domestic and personal religion of all ages has not been surpassed by any other book in the Bible. It is quoted over eighty times in the New Testament and this it belongs to a small group of four Old Testament books [the others being Genesis, Psalms, and Isaiah] to which the early Christians made frequent reference." (Thompson)

2. (2-4) The journey from Mount Horeb to Kadesh Barnea.

It is eleven days' journey from Horeb by way of Mount Seir to Kadesh Barnea. Now it came to pass in the fortieth year, in the eleventh month, on the first *day* of the month, *that* Moses spoke to the children of Israel according to all that the LORD had given him as commandments to them, after he had killed Sihon king of the Amorites, who dwelt in Heshbon, and Og king of Bashan, who dwelt at Ashtaroth in Edrei.

a. **Kadesh Barnea:** This was the place where, in Numbers 13 and 14, Israel believed the report of the unfaithful spies and rebelled against God, refusing to go into the Promised Land.

b. It is eleven days' journey from Horeb by way of Mount Seir to Kadesh Barnea: The journey from Mount Horeb to Kadesh Barnea only took eleven days. But from Kadesh Barnea (the threshold of the Promised Land) back to Kadesh Barnea (back to the threshold of the Promised Land) took forty years.

i. This was because it took forty years for the generation of unbelief - those who were adults when Israel left Egypt - it took forty years for that generation to die out in the wilderness, and for a generation of faith and trust in God to arise in place after them.

c. After he had killed Sihon king of the Amorites . . . and Og king of Bashan: Israel's great fear when they first came to

Kadesh Barnea and the opportunity to enter the Promised Land was that they would be crushed by the military prowess of the Canaanites. But when the new generation trusted God and went forward, God immediately gave them victory -

over two pagan kings (**Sihon** and **Og**). The victory was ready as soon as Israel was ready to receive it in faith.

3. (5) Moses the expositor.

On this side of the Jordan in the land of Moab, Moses began to explain this law, saying, a. **On this side of the Jordan:** This was one of the last things Moses did to prepare the people of Israel to finally enter into the Promised Land. Moses knew they needed to know the Word.

b. Moses began to explain this law: Moses will now serve as an expository teacher to Israel. The Hebrew word translated "**explain**"

comes from the ideas "to dig deeply" or "to mine." Moses will mine out the riches of God's truth to the people, and prepare them to enter in.

4. (6-8) The command to move on from Mount

Horeb.

"The LORD our God spoke to us in Horeb, saying: 'You have dwelt long enough at this mountain.

Turn and take your journey, and go to the mountains of the Amorites, to all the neighboring *places* in the plain, in the mountains and in the lowland, in the South and on the seacoast, to the land of the Canaanites and to Lebanon, as far as the great river, the River Euphrates. See, I have set the land before you; go in and possess the land which the LORD swore to your fathers; to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; to give to them and their descendants after them.'"

a. **The LORD our God spoke to us in Horeb:** This departure from Mount Sinai (**Horeb** and *Sinai* are different names for the same place) was recorded in Numbers 10. However, the Numbers 10 account does not give us the details recorded here.

b. **You have dwelt long enough at this mountain:** Simply, God told Israel to move on.

A year at Mount Sinai was enough; He did not bring them out of Egypt for them to live forever at Sinai. It was time to move on in faith and take the land of promise.

i. Galatians 4 and Hebrews 12 symbolically identify Mount Sinai with the Old Covenant of works and law. For the Christian today, it is important to spend *some* time under the law as a tutor (Gal. 3:24-25), so we know the holy character of God and our need for a Savior. But God never intended the Christian to live their spiritual life at Mount Sinai. The believer must move on in faith to the Promised Land.

c. **Turn and take your journey . . . See, I have set the land before you:** Though it would be a challenge, God had set the Promised Land before Israel - and Moses here remembered when He spoke to them at Sinai and told them to move on and take the land.

5. (9-18) When Moses appointed judges among

Israel.

"And I spoke to you at that time, saying: 'I alone am not able to bear you. The LORD your God has multiplied you, and here you *are* today, as the stars of heaven in multitude. May the LORD God of your fathers make you a thousand times more numerous than you are, and bless you as He has promised you! How can I alone bear your problems and your burdens and your complaints?

Choose wise, understanding, and knowledgeable men from among your tribes, and I will make them heads over you.' And you answered me and said, 'The thing which you have told *us* to do *is* good.' So I took the heads of your tribes, wise and knowledgeable men, and made them heads over you, leaders of thousands, leaders of hundreds, leaders of fifties, leaders of tens, and officers for your tribes. Then I commanded your judges at that time, saying, 'Hear *the cases* between your brethren, and judge righteously between a man and his brother or the stranger who is with him. You shall not show partiality in judgment; you shall hear the small as well as the great; you shall not be afraid in any man's presence, for the judgment *is* God's. The case that is too hard for you, bring to me, and I will hear it.' And I commanded you at that time all the things which you should do."

a. **Choose wise, understanding, and**

knowledgeable men from among your

tribes, and I will make them heads over

you: Some think that the appointment of leaders described in Deuteronomy 1 referred to the appointment of Judges in Exodus 18. Some others believe it refers the appointment of Elders described in Numbers 11. It could possibly be either, but from the flow of Moses' context in Deuteronomy 1, it seems best to consider that it was the appointment of elders in Numbers 11.

b. I alone am not able to bear you: Moses experienced this crisis in Numbers 11 when the people complained again about the food God provided. To help Moses bear the burden, God directed him to appoint seventy elders to assist him in bearing up under the pressure of leading the nation.

i. As described in Numbers 11, these elders had a precious function: To *stand there with* Moses (Num. 11:16), to have the same *Spirit* as Moses, and to *bear the burden of the people with* Moses (Num. 11:17).

c. So I took the heads of your tribes, wise and knowledgeable men, and made them heads over you: Moses chose the elders of Israel by using a combination of approval by the congregation, and approval by Moses himself.

Moses then instructed the elders in principles of righteous leadership, and thus relieved himself of many burdens.

B. Moses remembers when in unbelief, Israel refused to enter the Promised Land.

1. (19-21) Moses remembers his exhortation to

Israel at Kadesh Barnea.

"So we departed from Horeb, and went through all that great and terrible wilderness which you saw on the way to the mountains of the Amorites, as the LORD our God had commanded

us. Then we came to Kadesh Barnea. And I said to you, 'You have come to the mountains of the Amorites, which the LORD our God is giving us.

Look, the LORD your God has set the land before you; go up *and* possess *it*, as the LORD God of your fathers has spoken to you; do not fear or be discouraged.'"

a. **Look, the LORD your God has set the land before you; go up and possess it:** After seeing God's faithfulness in enabling them to cross the land of the Amorites, Moses was ready to lead the nation into Canaan.

b. **Do not fear or be discouraged:** This encouragement was important because this was the critical moment for Israel. They were a little more than a year out of Egypt and ready to go into the Promised Land. It was there before them, ready for them to take by faith, *if* they would not **fear or be discouraged**.

2. (22-23) Moses remembers Israel's suggestion to send forth spies.

"And everyone of you came near to me and said, 'Let us send men before us, and let them search out the land for us, and bring back word to us of the way by which we should go up, and of the cities into which we shall come.' The plan pleased me well; so I took twelve of your men, one man from *each* tribe."

a. **And everyone of you came near to me and said, "Let us send men before us"** : As Moses remembered this suggestion, he looked back with regret. There really was no compelling reason to send forth spies into the Promised Land.

i. God had told them that the land was good. Unless they did not believe Him, there was no reason to confirm it on their own. God had told them they would take the land and defeat the nations living there. Unless they did not believe Him, there was no reason to take a look at the enemies and see if God was somehow up to the challenge.

b. **And the plan pleased me well:** Moses must have had regret as he remembered this. The people suggested it and Moses agreed to it.

Yet when ten of the twelve spies came back with a report filled with fear and unbelief, the nation believed them and refused to believe God's promise and enter in.

i. From reading only Num. 13:2 it might seem that this plan to send spies into Canaan originated with God, not the people. But a careful look shows that Num. 13:2 dealt mainly with the number of spies to send (12) and how they should be chosen (one from each tribe). So though the plan did not originate with God (Deuteronomy 1 indicates that it started with the people, and was approved by Moses), the LORD essentially said: "If you are going to send spies, send twelve, and have them represent the whole nation by sending one from each tribe."

ii. Perhaps in this God made certain that not *all* the spies brought a report of unbelief.

3. (24-25) Moses remembers the journey and report of the spies.

"And they departed and went up into the mountains, and came to the Valley of Eshcol, and spied it out. They also took *some* of the fruit of the land in their hands and brought *it* down to us; and they brought back

word to us, saying, *'It is a good land which the LORD our God is giving us.'*"

a. The brought back word to us:

Significantly, Moses didn't mention the evil report of the unbelieving spies (Num. 13:28-29).

It is almost as if the memory was so painful that Moses wouldn't even deal with it.

b. It is a good land which the LORD our

God is giving us: It was enough that the nation of Israel had the report from the godly spies, Joshua and Caleb. In addition to that, *all* the twelve spies were united on saying *"It is a good land which the LORD our God is giving us"* (Num. 13:27).

4. (26-33) Moses remembers Israel's unbelieving rejection of the Promised Land, though he pleaded with them to take the land in faith.

"Nevertheless you would not go up, but rebelled against the command of the LORD your God; and you complained in your tents, and said, 'Because the LORD hates us, He has brought us out of the land of Egypt to deliver us into the hand of the Amorites, to destroy us. Where can we go up?

Our brethren have discouraged our hearts, saying, 'The people *are* greater and taller than we; the cities *are* great and fortified up to heaven; moreover we have seen the sons of the Anakim there.'" Then I said to you, 'Do not be terrified, or afraid of them. The LORD your God, who goes before you, He will fight for you, according to all He did for you in Egypt before your eyes, and in the wilderness where you saw how the LORD your God carried you, as a man carries his son, in all the way that you went until you came to this place.' Yet, for all that, you did not believe the LORD your God, who went in the way before you to search out a place for you to pitch your tents, to show you the way you should go, in the fire by night and in the cloud by day."

a. **Nevertheless:** In this context, this is a haunting word. It was the exact word in the mouth of the ten fearful spies when they began to give an evil testimony to Israel (Num. 13:28).

i. Essentially, the ten spies and all Israel said, "We went into the land of Canaan and found it to be a wonderful land, just as the LORD said it would be. God's word was true on that point. **Nevertheless** (essentially saying, 'despite all that'), we don't believe God when He says He will enable to overcome the enemies of the land and to possess it."

ii. *Nevertheless!* Despite the fact we have seen that God's word is true, we will not trust Him for great things in the future. This is a terrible testimony.

b. **You would not go up, but rebelled . . . and you murmured in your tents . . . you did not believe the LORD your God:** God had done nothing but show Himself faithful to Israel. They could not point to one instance where He had let them down, though the journey had not been easy. Yet they answered God's faithfulness with rebellion, murmuring, and unbelief.

i. They were not persuaded of the love of God, and they found it hard to trust a God they did not believe loved them. Christians today also need to be persuaded of the love of God. Many believers are hindered in their walk with God because they are not genuinely persuaded of the love of God for them. They should ask, "What would it take me finally convince me that God really loves me?" We don't wait for God to give us everything we want before we love Him. That is the selfish demand of a short-sighted

child, like the child who thinks mommy doesn't love him because he can't have all the candy he wants.

ii. God has already given the ultimate demonstration of His love: *But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.* (Rom. 5:8) The death of Jesus for guilty sinners is the ultimate demonstration of God's love; He can do nothing greater than what He has already done in Jesus.

Now we can simply receive His love.

c. The LORD your God, who goes before you, He will fight for you, according to all He did for you in Egypt before your eyes: With these words, Moses did his best to encourage the people. He called on them to specifically remember God's past faithfulness and consider that He was able to give them victory in the land of Canaan.

i. Satan loves to make us *forget* what we should *remember* (the past victories and miracles of God on our behalf). He also loves to make us *remember* what we should *forget* (our past of sin and the self-life).

d. Yet, for all that, you did not believe the LORD your God: In essence, it was not *sin* that kept Israel out of the Promised Land.

Instead, it was *unbelief* (though certainly, unbelief is sin). Israel's sin could be covered through atoning sacrifice; but their unbelief and doubt of God's love for them made them unable to trust God.

i. We often think that it is really some sin that hinders us from going on with the LORD. It is true that the LORD wants to deal with the sin and get it out of the way, but the way that happens is by deepening the relationship of love and trust in the LORD. Unbelief and lack of trust is the real enemy.

C. Moses remembers the aftermath of Israel's rebellion at Kadesh Barnea.

1. (34-40) Moses' remembers God's oath of judgment against unbelieving Israel.

"And the LORD heard the sound of your words, and was angry, and took an oath, saying, 'Surely not one of these men of this evil generation shall see that good land of which I swore to give to your fathers, except Caleb the son of Jephunneh; he shall see it, and to him and his children I am giving the land on which he walked, because he wholly followed the LORD.' The LORD was also angry with me for your sakes, saying, 'Even you shall not go in there; Joshua the son of Nun, who stands before you, he shall go in there. Encourage him, for he shall cause Israel to inherit it. Moreover your little ones and your children, who you say will be victims, who today have no knowledge of good and evil, they shall go in there; to them I will give it, and they shall possess it. But *as for* you, turn and take your journey into the wilderness by the Way of the Red Sea.'"

a. **Was angry, and took an oath:** In response to Israel's unbelief and lack of trust in God's love, God swore an oath (Psa. 95:11) that the adult generation which came out of Egypt would not inherit the Promised Land, but would die in the desolate wilderness instead.

b. **Except Caleb the son of Jephunneh:** The only exceptions were Caleb and Joshua. These were the faithful two among the twelve spies which came back with the report from the Promised Land (Num. 14:6-10).

c. **Even you shall not go in there:** Even Moses himself would not enter the Promised Land. Though this was not specifically said in Numbers 14 (it came later in Numbers 20), it could be inferred then, because Moses was not among the exceptions named (only Joshua and Caleb).

d. Joshua . . . he shall cause Israel to

inherit it: As great as Moses was (and truly, he was one of the giants of the Bible), he could not and would not lead Israel into the Promised Land. That was left up to one who came after

Moses, Joshua.

i. Moses was the great law giver, and represented relationship with God through the Law. This could give a person a wilderness kind of relationship with God, but could never bring them into the Promised Land kind of relationship with God. Only Joshua could do that - and the Hebrew name Joshua exactly corresponds to the name *Jesus*. Only Jesus can bring us into a Promised Land relationship with God.

e. Moreover your little ones and your children, whom you say will be victims . . .

they shall possess it: The great excuse of Israel for their unbelief at Kadesh Barnea was, "If we go and take the land, our children will be killed" (Num. 14:3). God answered their unbelieving excuse by saying, "You will be killed and your children will possess the land."

i. "Anything, in fact, will serve as an excuse, when the heart is bent on

compromise." (Spurgeon)

ii. It is sobering to consider how easily, how quickly, and how completely, God sees

through our excuses. We often feel confident in our excuses, because other people can't really challenge them - but God sees right through them.

2. (41-46) Moses remembers their half-hearted repentance and futile invasion attempt.

"Then you answered and said to me, 'We have sinned against the LORD; we will go up and fight, just as the LORD

our God commanded us.' And when everyone of you had girded on his weapons of war, you were ready to go up into the

mountain. And the LORD said to me, 'Tell them,

"Do not go up nor fight, for I *am* not among you; lest you be defeated before your enemies.'" So I spoke to you; yet you would not listen, but rebelled against the command of the LORD, and

presumptuously went up into the mountain. And

the Amorites who dwelt in that mountain came

out against you and chased you as bees do, and drove you back from Seir to Hormah. Then you

returned and wept before the LORD, but the

LORD would not listen to your voice nor give ear to you. So you remained in Kadesh many days,

according to the days that you spent *there*."

a. We have sinned against the LORD; we

will go up and fight: After hearing the consequences of their rejection of God, Israel had a change of heart. Yet they went forth in the flesh and not in faith, because God did not lead them.

b. Rebelled against the command of the

LORD: They did this *in the midst of their supposed repentance*. Their sorrow was not over grieving the heart of God but over forty more years in the wilderness. God therefore saw through their shallow repentance.

c. The Amorites who dwelt in that

mountain came out against you and

chased you as bees do: This shows how their futile invitation attempt ended in disaster. After their total defeat, *then* they wept and wept -

but again, this was over the consequences of

getting caught, not over grieving the heart of God, and not over their sin of not believing the great love of God.

© 2006 David Guzik - No distribution beyond personal use without permission **2** Now it is ordinarily an eleven-day

journey from Horeb to Kadesh Barnea by way of Mount Seir. **3** However, it was not until the first day of the eleventh month of the fortieth year that Moses addressed the Israelites just as the LORD had instructed him to do. **4** This took place after the defeat of King Sihon of the Amorites, whose capital was in Heshbon, and King Og of Bashan, whose capital was in Ashtaroth, specifically in Edrei. **5** So it was in the Transjordan, in Moab, that Moses began to deliver these words: **6** The LORD our God spoke to us at Horeb and said, "You have stayed in the area of this mountain long enough. **7** Get up now, resume your journey, heading for the Amorite hill country, to all its areas including the arid country, the highlands, the Shephelah, the Negev, and the coastal plain – all of Canaan and Lebanon as far as the Great River, that is, the Euphrates. **8** Look! I have already given the land to you. Go, occupy the territory that I, the LORD, promised to give to your ancestors Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and to their descendants." **9** I also said to you at that time, "I am no longer able to sustain you by myself. **10** The LORD your God has increased your population to the point that you are now as numerous as the very stars of the sky. **11** Indeed, may the LORD, the God of your ancestors, make you a thousand times more numerous than you are now, blessing you just as he said he would! **12** But how can I alone bear up under the burden of your hardship and strife? **13** Select wise and practical men, those known among your tribes, whom I may appoint as your leaders." **14** You replied to me that what I had said to you was good. **15** So I chose as your tribal leaders wise and well-known men, placing them over you as administrators of groups of thousands, hundreds, fifties, and tens, and also as other tribal officials. **16** I furthermore admonished your judges at that time that they should pay attention to issues among your fellow citizens and judge fairly, whether between one citizen and another or a citizen and a resident foreigner. **17** They must not discriminate in

judgment, but hear the lowly and the great alike. Nor should they be intimidated by human beings, for judgment belongs to God. If the matter being adjudicated is too difficult for them, they should bring it before me for a hearing.

18 So I instructed you at that time regarding everything you should do. **19** Then we left Horeb and passed through all that immense, forbidding wilderness that you saw on the way to the Amorite hill country as the LORD our God had commanded us to do, finally arriving at Kadesh Barnea. **20** Then I said to you, "You have come to the Amorite hill country which the LORD our God is about to give us. **21** Look, he has placed the land in front of you!

Go up, take possession of it, just as the LORD, the God of your ancestors, said to do. Do not be afraid or discouraged!"

22 So all of you approached me and said, "Let's send some men ahead of us to scout out the land and bring us back word as to how we should attack it and what the cities are like there." **23** I thought this was a good idea, so I sent twelve men from among you, one from each tribe. **24** They left and went up to the hill country, coming to the Eshcol Valley, which they scouted out. **25** Then they took some of the produce of the land and carried it back down to us. They also brought a report to us, saying, "The land that the LORD our God is about to give us is good."

26 You were not willing to go up, however, but instead rebelled against the LORD your God. **27** You complained among yourselves privately and said, "Because the LORD hates us he brought us from Egypt to deliver us over to the Amorites so they could destroy us! **28** What is going to happen to us? Our brothers have drained away our courage by describing people who are more numerous and taller than we are, and great cities whose defenses appear to be as high as heaven itself! Moreover, they said they saw Anakites there." **29** So I responded to you, "Do not be terrified of them! **30** The LORD your God is about to go ahead of you; he will fight for you, just as you saw him do in Egypt **31** and

in the desert, where you saw him carrying you along like a man carries his son. This he did everywhere you went until you came to this very place.”

32 However, through all this you did not have confidence in the LORD your God, **33** the one who was constantly going before you to find places for you to set up camp. He appeared by fire at night and cloud by day, to show you the way you ought to go.

34 When the LORD heard you, he became angry and made this vow: **35** “Not a single person of this evil generation will see the good land that I promised to give to your ancestors!

36 The exception is Caleb son of Jephunneh; he will see it and I will give him and his descendants the territory on which he has walked, because he has wholeheartedly followed me.” **37** As for me, the LORD was also angry with me on your account.

He said, “You also will not be able to go there. **38**

However, Joshua son of Nun, your assistant, will go.

Encourage him, because he will enable Israel to inherit the land. **39** Also, your infants, who you thought would die on the way, and your children, who as yet do not know good from bad, will go there; I will give them the land and they will possess it. **40** But as for you, turn back and head for the desert by the way to the Red Sea.”

41 Then you responded to me and admitted, “We have sinned against the LORD. We will now go up and fight as the LORD our God has told us to do.” So you each put on your battle gear and prepared to go up to the hill country.

42 But the LORD told me: “Tell them this: ‘Do not go up and fight, because I will not be with you and you will be defeated by your enemies.’” **43** I spoke to you, but you did not listen. Instead you rebelled against the LORD and recklessly went up to the hill country. **44** The Amorite inhabitants of that area confronted you and chased you like a swarm of bees, striking you down from Seir as far as Hormah. **45** Then you

came back and wept before the LORD, but he paid no attention to you whatsoever. **46**

Therefore, you remained at Kadesh for a long time – indeed, for the full time.

1 Then we turned and set out toward the desert land on the way to the Red Sea just as the LORD told me to do, detouring around Mount Seir for a long time.

Guzik - Deuteronomy 2:1-37

Deuteronomy 2 - Moses Remembers the Desert Years and the March On to Canaan

A. Moses remembers the desert years.

1. (1-7) Moses remembers the journey through the land of Edom.

"Then we turned and journeyed into the wilderness of the Way of the Red Sea, as the LORD spoke to me, and we skirted Mount Seir for many days. And the LORD spoke to me, saying:

'You have skirted this mountain long enough; turn northward. And command the people, saying, "*You are about to* pass through the territory of your brethren, the descendants of Esau, who live in Seir; and they will be afraid of you. Therefore watch yourselves carefully. Do not meddle with them, for I will not give you *any* of their land, no, not so much as one footstep, because I have given Mount Seir to Esau *as* a possession. You shall buy food from them with money, that you may eat; and you shall also buy water from them with money, that you may drink. For the LORD your God has blessed you in all the work of your hand. He knows your trudging through this great wilderness. These forty years the LORD your God *has been* with you; you have lacked nothing.'"

a. **You are about to pass through the territory of your brethren, the**

descendants of Esau: The **descendants of Esau** were distant relatives to the people of Israel (400 years earlier,

the brother of Jacob was Esau). God didn't want Israel to take the land that He gave to Esau and his descendants, the Edomites (**Edom** was a nickname for Esau).

i. Perhaps the most famous Edomite in the New Testament was Herod the Great. He was hated by the Jews because he was an Edomite but he wanted to be received and respected as a Jew.

b. **Do not meddle with them, for I will not give you any of their land:**

Israel was not just some conquering army, out to get whatever land it could take. It probably was strong enough to simply take the land of Edom, but

Israel only received what God had promised to them.

c. **You shall buy food from them with**

money . . . you shall also buy water: God commanded Israel to treat the Edomites with respect, even though they could have

dominated them as a stronger nation.

i. How we treat those weaker than ourselves is always a good measure of character.

When we have the capability to dominate or abuse others and do not, it shows that we have good character. For some of these reasons, God commanded Israel to treat the weaker nation of Edom well.

2. (8-15) Moses remembers the journey through Moab.

"And when we passed beyond our brethren, the descendants of Esau who dwell in Seir, away

from the road of the plain, away from Elath and Ezion Geber, we turned and passed by way of the Wilderness of Moab. Then the LORD said to me, 'Do not harass Moab, nor contend with them in

battle, for I will not give you *any* of their land *as* a possession, because I have given Ar to the descendants of Lot *as* a possession.'" (The Emim had dwelt there in times past, a people as great and numerous and tall as the Anakim. They were also regarded as giants, like the Anakim, but the Moabites call them Emim. The Horites formerly dwelt in Seir, but the descendants of Esau dispossessed them and destroyed them from before them, and dwelt in their place, just as Israel did to the land of their possession which the LORD gave them.) 'Now rise and cross over the Valley of the Zered.' So we crossed over the Valley of the Zered. And the time we took to come from Kadesh Barnea until we crossed over the Valley of the Zered *was* thirty-eight years, until all the generation of the men of war was consumed from the midst of the camp, just as the LORD had sworn to them. For indeed the hand of the LORD was against them, to destroy them from the midst of the camp until they were consumed."

a. Passed by way of the Wilderness of

Moab: The Moabites were also distant relatives to Israel; they descended from Lot, who was the nephew of Abraham. And as with Edom,

God did not want Israel to **harass Moab, nor contend with them in battle** - their land was not the land God intended to give Israel.

i. One of the more famous Moabites in the Bible was Ruth. She was a Moabite woman who married an Israelite man name Ruth, and became grandmother to King David and one of the ancestors of the Messiah.

b. The Emim had dwelt there in times

past: The Moabites were of note because they defeated a Canaanite people known as the **Emim**, who were a large, fearsome race as were the **Anakim**.

i. The term translated **giants** here is

actually the Hebrew word *rephaim*. The term *rephaim* is often translated "giants," but it actually means "fearsome ones."

ii. The **Rephaim** were a group of large, warlike people who populated Canaan before the Israelites. In the area east of the Jordan River, they were known by many names: The Moabites called them **Emim**, the Ammonites called them *Zamzummin* (Deu. 2:20).

c. **Thirty-eight years:** In these brief verses, Moses covered thirty-eight years of Israel's wandering in the wilderness. This was a period when they just took up time, waiting for the generation of unbelief to die so that the generation of faith could take the Promised Land.

B. Moses remembers the nations they encountered on their way to Canaan.

1. (16-23) Going through the land of the Ammonites.

"So it was, when all the men of war had finally perished from among the people, that the LORD spoke to me, saying: 'This day you are to cross over at Ar, the boundary of Moab. And *when* you come near the people of Ammon, do not harass them or meddle with them, for I will not give

you *any* of the land of the people of Ammon *as* a possession, because I have given it to the descendants of Lot *as* a possession.'" (That was also regarded as a land of giants; giants formerly dwelt there. But the Ammonites call them Zamzummim, a people as great and numerous and tall as the Anakim. But the LORD destroyed them before them, and they dispossessed them and dwelt in their place, just as He had done for the descendants of Esau, who dwelt in Seir, when He destroyed

the Horites from before them. They dispossessed them and dwelt in their place, even to this day. And the Avim, who dwelt in villages as far as Gaza; the Caphtorim, who came from Caphtor, destroyed them and dwelt in their place.)

a. **I will not give you any of the land of the people of Ammon:** As with the Edomites and the Moabites, the land of the Ammonites was also not for the people of Israel.

2. (24-37) Moses remembers the conquest of Sihon, king of the Amorites.

" 'Rise, take your journey, and cross over the River Arnon. Look, I have given into your hand Sihon the Amorite, king of Heshbon, and his land.

Begin to possess *it*, and engage him in battle.

This day I will begin to put the dread and fear of you upon the nations under the whole heaven, who shall hear the report of you, and shall

tremble and be in anguish because of you.' And I sent messengers from the Wilderness of

Kedemoth to Sihon king of Heshbon, with words

of peace, saying, Let me pass through your land; I will keep strictly to the road, and I will turn neither to the right nor to the left. You shall sell me food for money, that I may eat, and give me water for money, that I may drink; only let me pass through on foot, just as the descendants of Esau who dwell in Seir and the Moabites who dwell in Ar did for me, until I cross the Jordan to the land which the LORD our God is giving us.'

But Sihon king of Heshbon would not let us pass through, for the LORD your God hardened his

spirit and made his heart obstinate, that He might deliver him into your hand, as *it is* this day.

And the LORD said to me, 'See, I have begun to give Sihon and his land over to you. Begin to

possess *it*, that you may inherit his land.' Then Sihon and all his people came out against us to fight at Jahaz. And the

LORD our God delivered him over to us; so we defeated him, his sons, and all his people. We took all his cities at that time, and we utterly destroyed the men, women, and little ones of every city; we left none remaining. We took only the livestock as plunder for ourselves, with the spoil of the cities which we took. From Aroer, which *is* on the bank of the River Arnon, and *from* the city that *is* in the ravine, as far as Gilead, there was not one city too strong for us; the LORD our God delivered all to us. Only you did not go near the land of the people of Ammon; anywhere along the River Jabbok, or to the cities of the mountains, or wherever the LORD our God had forbidden us."

a. **Sihon king of Heshbon would not let us**

pass through: Because of this refusal, Israel fought a battle recorded in Numbers 21. They simply asked for safe passage through the land of the Amorites but they were refused.

b. **The LORD your God hardened his spirit**

and made his heart obstinate, that He

might deliver him into your hand: God

worked behind the scenes in hardening the heart of Sihon, the King of the Amorites.

i. It was right for God to do this because the Creator has the right to do whatever He

pleases with His creatures. But it was also

right because of the *way* God did it. God did not persuade a reluctant Sihon to act out against Israel; God simply let Sihon's heart

take the evil way it wanted to take. God did

not change Sihon's heart from good to bad,

but hardened it in its malice towards Israel.

c. **That He might deliver him into your**

hand: This explains why God hardened the heart of Sihon.

God led Sihon into the destructive course that his heart desired so that the land of the Amorites became the possession and inheritance of Israel.

d. **Utterly destroyed the men, women, and**

little ones of every city; we left none

remaining: The war against the Amorites was one of the unique wars of judgment God told Israel to fight. In it, Israel was not just to defeat the Amorites on the field of battle, but to bring judgment against their whole society.

e. There was not one city too strong for

us: Thirty-eight years before, Israel refused to go into the Promised Land because they felt they were over-matched militarily. Here, when

they began to enter the land by faith, God

showed them how it *could* have been 38 years before - if they had only believed Him.

i. There was not one city too strong for

us is actually, "there was not one city too high for us." The high walls of the Canaanite cities had intimidated Israel 38 years before (see Deu. 1:28). But walking in faith, they were now nothing before the LORD.

© 2006 David Guzik - No distribution beyond personal use without permission **2** At this point the LORD said to me, **3** "You have circled around this mountain long enough; now turn north. **4**

Instruct these people as follows: 'You are about to cross the border of your relatives the descendants of Esau, who inhabit Seir. They will be afraid of you, so watch yourselves carefully. **5** Do not be hostile toward them, because I am not giving you any of their land, not even a footprint, for I have given Mount Seir as an inheritance for Esau. **6** You may purchase food to eat and water to drink from them. **7** All along the way I, the LORD your God, have blessed your every effort. I have been attentive to your travels through this great wasteland. These forty years I have been with you; you have lacked for nothing.'"

8 So we turned away from our relatives the descendants of Esau, the inhabitants of Seir, turning from the desert route, from Elat and Ezion Geber, and traveling the way of the Moab wastelands. **9** Then the LORD said to me, "Do not

harass Moab and provoke them to war, for I will not give you any of their land as your territory. This is because I have given Ar to the descendants of Lot as their possession. **10** (The Emites used to live there, a people as powerful, numerous, and tall as the Anakites. **11** These people, as well as the Anakites, are also considered Rephaites; the Moabites call them Emites. **12** Previously the Horites lived in Seir but the descendants of Esau dispossessed and destroyed them and settled in their place, just as Israel did to the land it came to possess, the land the LORD gave them.) **13** Now, get up and cross the Wadi Zered.” So we did so. **14** Now the length of time it took for us to go from Kadesh Barnea to the crossing of Wadi Zered was thirty-eight years, time for all the military men of that generation to die, just as the LORD had vowed to them. **15** Indeed, it was the very hand of the LORD that eliminated them from within the camp until they were all gone.

16 So it was that after all the military men had been eliminated from the community, **17** the LORD said to me, **18** “Today you are going to cross the border of Moab, that is, of Ar. **19** But when you come close to the Ammonites, do not harass or provoke them because I am not giving you any of the Ammonites’ land as your possession; I have already given it to Lot’s descendants as their possession.

20 (That also is considered to be a land of the Rephaites. The Rephaites lived there originally; the Ammonites call them Zamzummites. **21** They are a people as powerful, numerous, and tall as the Anakites. But the LORD destroyed the Rephaites in advance of the Ammonites, so they dispossessed them and settled down in their place. **22** This is exactly what he did for the descendants of Esau who lived in Seir when he destroyed the Horites before them so that they could dispossess them and settle in their area to this very day. **23** As for the Avvites who lived in settlements as far west as Gaza, Caphtorites who came from Crete destroyed them and settled down in their place.) **24** Get up,

make your way across Wadi Arnon. Look! I have already delivered over to you Sihon the Amorite, king of Heshbon, and his land. Go ahead! Take it! Engage him in war! **25** This very day I will begin to fill all the people of the earth with dread and to terrify them when they hear about you. They will shiver and shake in anticipation of your approach.”

26 Then I sent messengers from the Kedemoth Desert to King Sihon of Heshbon with an offer of peace: **27** “Let me pass through your land; I will keep strictly to the roadway. I will not turn aside to the right or the left. **28**

Sell me food for cash so that I can eat and sell me water to drink. Just allow me to go through on foot, **29** just as the descendants of Esau who live at Seir and the Moabites who live in Ar did for me, until I cross the Jordan to the land the LORD our God is giving us.” **30** But King Sihon of Heshbon was unwilling to allow us to pass near him because the LORD our God had made him obstinate and stubborn so that he might deliver him over to you this very day. **31** The LORD said to me, “Look! I have already begun to give over Sihon and his land to you. Start right now to take his land as your possession.” **32** When Sihon and all his troops emerged to encounter us in battle at Jahaz, **33**

the LORD our God delivered him over to us and we struck him down, along with his sons and everyone else. **34** At that time we seized all his cities and put every one of them under divine judgment, including even the women and children; we left no survivors. **35** We kept only the livestock and plunder from the cities for ourselves. **36**

From Aroer, which is at the edge of Wadi Arnon (it is the city in the wadi), all the way to Gilead there was not a town able to resist us – the LORD our God gave them all to us. **37** However, you did not approach the land of the Ammonites, the Wadi Jabbok, the cities of the hill country, or any place else forbidden by the LORD our God.

1 Next we set out on the route to Bashan, but King Og of Bashan and his whole army came out to meet us in battle at

Edrei.

Guzik - Deuteronomy 3:1-29

***Deuteronomy 3 - Moses Remembers the March
On to Canaan, and the Appointment of Joshua***

A. Moses remembers the defeat of Bashan.

1. (1-2) God commands Israel to attack Bashan.

"Then we turned and went up the road to

Bashan; and Og king of Bashan came out against us, he and all his people, to battle at Edrei. And the LORD said to me, 'Do not fear him, for I have delivered him and all his people and his land into your hand; you shall do to him as you did to Sihon king of the Amorites, who dwelt at Heshbon.'"

a. **Do not fear him, for I have delivered him and all his people and his land into**

your hand: As Israel continued closer to the Promised Land, moving westward towards the Jordan River, they passed through the land of Og, king of Bashan.

2. (3-11) Israel defeats Bashan.

"So the LORD our God also delivered into our hands Og king of Bashan, with all his people, and we attacked him until he had no survivors remaining. And we took all his cities at that time; there was not a city which we did not take from them: sixty cities, all the region of Argob, the kingdom of Og in Bashan. All these cities *were* fortified with high walls, gates, and bars, besides a great many rural towns. And we utterly destroyed them, as we did to Sihon king of Heshbon, utterly destroying the men, women, and children of every city. But all the livestock and the spoil of the cities we took as booty for ourselves. And at that time we took the land from the hand of the two kings of the Amorites who *were* on this side of the Jordan, from the River Arnon to Mount Hermon (the Sidonians call Hermon Sirion, and the Amorites call it Senir), all the cities of the plain, all Gilead, and all Bashan, as far as Salcah and Edrei, cities of

the kingdom of Og in Bashan. For only Og king of Bashan remained of the remnant of the giants. Indeed his bedstead *was* an iron bedstead. (*Is* it not in Rabbah of the people of Ammon?) Nine cubits *is* its length and four cubits its width, according to the standard cubit."

a. And we took all his cities at that

time . . . sixty cities: This brought Israel even more territory to occupy on the east side of the Jordan River, and it showed them that they could, through the power of God, overcome the

mighty enemies they would confront on the west side of the Jordan River.

b. Only Og king of Bashan remained of the

remnant of the giants: Apparently, Og was the last of the *rephaim* in his area, on the east side of the Jordan River .

i. The repeated references to the *rephaim* in these first three chapters shows that Israel, when trusting in God, was well able to

defeat this race of fearsome warriors. It also shows that their fear of these men back in

Numbers 13, where they first refused to go into the Promised Land, was unfounded.

Their excuses are shown to be weaker in light of the next generation's victories.

c. Indeed his bedstead was an iron

bedstead: Og's **bedstead** was 14 feet by 6

feet in modern measurement. Some

commentators believe this actually describes his burial sarcophagus.

B. Moses remembers the tribes that settled on the east side of the Jordan River.

1. (12-17) The division of the land conquered on the east side of the Jordan River among the tribes of Reuben, Gad, and half the tribe of Manasseh.

"And this land, *which* we possessed at that time, from Aroer, which *is* by the River Arnon, and half the mountains of

Gilead and its cities, I gave to the Reubenites and the Gadites. The rest of Gilead, and all Bashan, the kingdom of Og, I gave to half the tribe of Manasseh. (All the region of Argob, with all Bashan, was called the land of the giants. Jair the son of Manasseh took all the region of Argob, as far as the border of the

Geshurites and the Maachathites, and called Bashan after his own name, Havoth Jair, to this day.) Also I gave Gilead to Machir. And to the Reubenites and the Gadites I gave from Gilead as far as the River Arnon, the middle of the river as *the* border, as far as the River Jabbok, the border of the people of Ammon; the plain also, with the Jordan as *the* border, from Chinnereth as far as the east side of the Sea of the Arabah (the Salt Sea), below the slopes of Pisgah."

a. And this land, which we possessed at

that time: These two-and-one-half tribes decided that this land on the east side of the Jordan River was good enough for them, and the LORD allowed it - if they would fulfill the obligations mentioned in the following verses.

2. (18-20) The command for the trans-jordan tribes to assist the rest of Israel in the conquest of Canaan.

"Then I commanded you at that time, saying:

'The LORD your God has given you this land to possess. All you men of valor shall cross over armed before your brethren, the children of

Israel. But your wives, your little ones, and your livestock (I know that you have much livestock) shall stay in your cities which I have given you, until the LORD has given rest to your brethren as to you, and they also possess the land which the LORD your God is giving them beyond the Jordan.

Then each of you may return to his possession which I have given you.'"

C. Moses remembers the appointment of Joshua.

1. (21-22) Moses encourages Joshua.

"And I commanded Joshua at that time, saying,

'Your eyes have seen all that the LORD your God has done to these two kings; so will the LORD do to all the kingdoms through which you pass. You must not fear them, for the LORD your God Himself fights for you.'

a. **And I commanded Joshua at that time:** Joshua had a huge job to do - to bring a whole nation into a land where they would not be welcome, and where they would have to fight to possess what God had rightfully given to them.

b. **You must not fear them, for the LORD your God Himself fights for you:** With this huge challenge in front of him, Joshua is encouraged to remember **all that the LORD**

your God has done to these two kings

(Sihon and Og). Remembering God's past faithfulness is key to present and future victory.

2. (23-29) Moses remembers his plea to enter the Promised Land.

"Then I pleaded with the LORD at that time, saying: 'O Lord GOD, You have begun to show

Your servant Your greatness and Your mighty hand, for what god *is there* in heaven or on earth who can do *anything* like Your works and Your mighty *deeds*? I pray, let me cross over and see the good land beyond the Jordan, those pleasant mountains, and Lebanon.' But the LORD was angry with me on your account, and would not

listen to me. So the LORD said to me: 'Enough of that! Speak no more to Me of this matter. Go up to the top of Pisgah, and lift your eyes toward the west, the north, the south, and the east; behold *it* with your eyes, for you shall not cross over this Jordan. But command Joshua, and encourage him and strengthen him; for he shall go over

before this people, and he shall cause them to inherit the land which you will see.' So we stayed in the valley opposite Beth Peor."

a. **Then I pleaded with the LORD . . . Let**

me cross over and see: Moses knew God was rich in mercy and forgiveness. He knew there was no harm in asking God to relent from His previous judgment that Moses would not see the Promised Land.

i. We can appreciate what a painful thing this was for Moses. He lived the first 40 years of his life confident in his own ability to deliver Israel. He spent the next 40 years of his life having that confidence demolished as he tended his father-in-law's sheep. He spent the last 40 years of his life being used of God to do what he was called to do. Now, he was not allowed to see the end result. No wonder Moses **pleaded with the LORD**.

b. Enough of that! Speak no more to Me of this matter: God did not want to hear Moses' appeal on this matter. Because of his sin at Meribah (Numbers 20), where he misrepresented God as being angry with Israel when He was not, Moses could not enter the Promised Land.

i. This may seem an excessively harsh punishment for Moses. It seemed that after only one slip-up, he then had to die short of the Promised Land. But Moses was being judged by a stricter standard because of his leadership position with the nation, and because he had a uniquely close relationship with God.

ii. It is right for teachers and leaders to be judged by a stricter standard (Jam. 3:1); though it is unrighteous to hold teachers and leaders to a perfect standard. It is true the people's conduct was worse than Moses' but it is irrelevant.

iii. Worst of all, Moses defaced a beautiful picture of Jesus' redemptive work through the rock which provided water in the wilderness. The New Testament makes it clear this water-providing, life-giving rock was a picture of Jesus (1Co. 10:4). Jesus, being struck once, provided life for all who would drink of Him (Joh. 7:37). But was unnecessary - and unrighteous - that Jesus would be struck again, much less again twice, because the Son of God needed only to suffer once (Heb. 10:10-12). Jesus can now be come to with words of faith (Rom. 10:8-10), as Moses should have only used words of faith to bring life-giving water to the nation of Israel. Moses "ruined" this picture of the work of Jesus God intended.

c. Speak no more to Me of this matter:

Moses was a great man of intercession - perhaps one of the greatest in the Bible. Yet, God would say "no" even to Moses in prayer.

God will sometimes say no even to His mightiest intercessors (Jer. 15:1).

d. **Go up to Pisgah:** This was the place where Moses would be able to see the Promised from a distance, and then die - and where the book of Deuteronomy will end.

e. But command Joshua, and encourage

him and strengthen him: It was probably easy for Moses to have a bad attitude here -

"well, if I'm not going into the Promised Land, I'm sure not going to knock myself out training my replacement." But that was not the heart of Moses - he would do everything he could to love the people, prepare them to go in, and to make Joshua a success. A man of God would not do it any other way.

i. Moses had the heart of a true shepherd. He knew that his ministry was not centered on himself and his own satisfaction, but on God and His people.

ii. "In fact, Moses' death is not recorded until chapter 34, so that the whole book of Deuteronomy is framed between the announcement of Moses' impending death and the announcement of his actual death. The book is thus, in a sense, the spiritual testament of Moses, Israel's great Lawgiver." (Thompson)

© 2006 David Guzik - No distribution beyond personal use without permission **2** The LORD, however, said to me, "Don't be afraid of him because I have already given him, his whole army, and his land to you. You will do to him exactly what you did to King Sihon of the Amorites who lived in Heshbon." **3**

So the LORD our God did indeed give over to us King Og of Bashan and his whole army and we struck them down until not a single survivor was left. **4** We captured all his cities at that time – there was not a town we did not take from them – sixty cities, all the region of Argob, the dominion of Og in Bashan. **5** All of these cities were fortified by high walls, gates, and locking bars; in addition there were a great many open villages. **6** We put all of these under divine judgment just as we had done to King Sihon of Heshbon – every occupied city, including women and children. **7** But all the livestock and plunder from the cities we kept for ourselves. **8** So at that time we took the land of the two Amorite kings in the Transjordan from Wadi Arnon to Mount Hermon **9** (the Sidonians call Hermon Sirion and the Amorites call it Senir), **10** all the cities of the plateau, all of Gilead and Bashan as far as Salecah and Edrei, cities of the kingdom of Og in Bashan.

11 Only King Og of Bashan was left of the remaining Rephaites. (It is noteworthy that his sarcophagus was made of iron. Does it not, indeed, still remain in Rabbath of the Ammonites? It is thirteen and a half feet long and six feet wide according to standard measure.) **12** This is the land we brought under our control at that time: The territory extending from Aroer by the Wadi Arnon and half the Gilead hill country with its cities I gave to the Reubenites and Gadites. **13** The rest of Gilead and all of Bashan, the kingdom of Og, I gave to half the tribe of Manasseh. (All the region of Argob, that is, all Bashan, is called the land of Rephaim. **14** Jair, son of Manasseh, took all the Argob region as far as the border with the Geshurites and Maacathites (namely Bashan) and called it by his name, Havvoth-Jair, which it retains to this very day.) **15** I gave Gilead to Machir. **16** To the Reubenites and Gadites I allocated the territory extending from Gilead as far as Wadi Arnon (the exact middle of the wadi was a boundary) all the way to the Wadi Jabbok, the Ammonite border. **17** The Arabah and the Jordan River were also a border, from the sea of Chinnereth to the sea of the Arabah (that is, the Salt Sea), beneath the watershed of Pisgah to the east.

18 At that time I instructed you as follows: "The LORD your God has given you this land for your possession. You warriors are to cross over before your fellow Israelites equipped for battle. **19** But your wives, children, and livestock (of which I know you have many) may remain in the cities I have given you. **20** You must fight until the LORD gives your countrymen victory as he did you and they take possession of the land that the LORD your God is giving them on the other side of the Jordan River. Then each of you may return to his own territory that I have given you." **21** I also commanded Joshua at the same time, "You have seen everything the LORD your God did to these two kings; he will do the same to all the kingdoms where you are going.

22 Do not be afraid of them, for the LORD your God will personally fight for you."

23 Moreover, at that time I pleaded with the LORD, **24**

"O, Lord GOD, you have begun to show me your greatness and strength. (What god in heaven or earth can rival your works and mighty deeds?) **25** Let me please cross over to see the good land on the other side of the Jordan River – this good hill country and the Lebanon!" **26** But the LORD

was angry at me because of you and would not listen to me. Instead, he said to me, "Enough of that! Do not speak to me anymore about this matter. **27** Go up to the top of Pisgah and take a good look to the west, north, south, and east, for you will not be allowed to cross the Jordan. **28**

Commission Joshua, and encourage and strengthen him, because he will lead these people over and will enable them to inherit the land you will see." **29** So we settled down in the valley opposite Beth Peor.

1 Now, Israel, pay attention to the statutes and ordinances I am about to teach you, so that you might live and go on to enter and take possession of the land that the LORD, the God of your ancestors, is giving you.

Guzik - Deuteronomy 4:1-49

Deuteronomy 4 - A Call to Obedience

A. Moses challenges the nation to obedience.

1. (1-8) Moses challenges Israel to learn from the example of Baal-Peor.

"Now, O Israel, listen to the statutes and the judgments which I teach you to observe, that you may live, and go in and possess the land which the LORD God of your fathers is giving you. You shall not add to the word which I command you, nor take from it, that you may keep the commandments of the LORD your God which I

command you. Your eyes have seen what the LORD did at Baal Peor; for the LORD your God has destroyed from among you all the men who

followed Baal of Peor. But you who held fast to the LORD your God *are* alive today, every one of you. Surely I have taught you statutes and judgments, just as the LORD my God

commanded me, that you should act according *to them* in the land which you go to possess.

Therefore be careful to observe *them*; for this *is* your wisdom and your understanding in the sight of the peoples who will hear all these statutes, and say, 'Surely this great nation *is* a wise and understanding people.' For what great nation *is there* that has God *so* near to it, as the LORD our God *is* to us, for whatever *reason* we may call upon Him? And what great nation *is there* that has *such* statutes and righteous judgments as are in all this law which I set before you this day?"

a. **Now, O Israel, listen:** Moses had reminded Israel of their many rebellions against God in the wilderness. Now, as they were ready to enter into the Promised Land, he wanted them

to think about their need for present obedience in light of their past rebellions.

i. As noticed before, one of Satan's great strategies is to make us remember what we should forget, and forget what we should remember. If we don't remember our past sins and rebellions against God, we can easily repeat them, falling into the same sinful patterns and traps: *T herefore let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall.*

(1Co. 10:12)

b. **That you may live:** In the larger sense, spiritual life and death depended on Israel's obedience. Yet also in the more immediate

sense, physical life and death depended on their obedience. Israel was about to attack a strong nation and to push them

out of the Promised Land - if they didn't have the blessing of the LORD upon them, they would soon be in a lot of trouble.

i. In fact, Israel's first military loss in the Promised Land (at Ai, Joshua 7) came

specifically because they had disobeyed God.

36 men died at Ai, because one man in

Israel (Achan) did not obey the command of the LORD.

c. **You shall not add to the word which I**

command you, nor take anything from it: This is an important principle regarding God's Word. We are not to add to it (in the sense of making the traditions and opinions of men equal to the law of God), nor are we to take away from it (by bad teaching or explaining away passages).

i. This same idea is repeated in Rev. 22:18-

19: *For I testify to everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: If anyone adds to these things, God will add to him the plagues that are written in this book; and if anyone takes away from the*

words of the book of this prophecy, God

shall take away his part from the Book of

Life, from the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book.

d. **Your eyes have seen what the LORD did**

at Baal Peor: At **Baal Peor**, Israel sinned by committing both sexual and spiritual immorality with the women of Moab. Moses warned the people of Israel that if they rejected God now as they did back then, the result would be the same. Many would die in the judgment of the LORD.

e. **Surely this great nation is a wise and**

understanding nation: God's intention was that through Israel's obedience to the covenant, He would exalt them among the nations and make them a witness. This was so that

foreigners, like the Queen of Sheba who visited Solomon at the height of his blessing, would see that the LORD God of Israel was indeed the LORD God (1 Kings 10).

2. (9-20) Moses challenges Israel to learn from the example at Mount Sinai (Horeb).

"Only take heed to yourself, and diligently keep yourself, lest you forget the things your eyes have seen, and lest they depart from your heart all the days of your life. And teach them to your children and your grandchildren, " *especially concerning* the day you stood before the LORD

your God in Horeb, when the LORD said to me, 'Gather the people to Me, and I will let them hear My words, that they may learn to fear Me all the days they live on the earth, and *that* they may teach their children.' Then you came near and stood at the foot of the mountain, and the mountain burned with fire to the midst of heaven, with darkness, cloud, and thick darkness.

And the LORD spoke to you out of the midst of the fire. You heard the sound of the words, but saw no form; *you* only *heard* a voice. So He declared to you His covenant which He commanded you to perform, the Ten Commandments; and He wrote them on two tablets of stone. And the LORD commanded me at that time to teach you statutes and judgments, that you might observe them in the land which you cross over to possess. Take careful heed to yourselves, for you saw no form when the LORD

spoke to you at Horeb out of the midst of the fire, lest you act corruptly and make for yourselves a carved image in the form of any figure: the likeness of male or female, the likeness of any animal that *is* on the earth or the likeness of any winged bird that flies in the air, the likeness of anything that creeps on the ground or the likeness of any fish that *is* in the water beneath the earth. And *take heed*, lest you lift your eyes to heaven, and *when* you see the sun, the moon,

and the stars, all the host of heaven, you feel driven to worship them and serve them, which the LORD your God has given to all the peoples under the whole heaven as a heritage. But the LORD has taken you and brought you out of the iron furnace, out of Egypt, to be His people, an inheritance, as you are this day."

a. **Only take heed to yourself:** After this warning, Moses then warned them to take the commands of God and **teach them to your**

children and your grandchildren. Israel was not play the hypocritical game of "do what I say and not what I do" with their children. Instead they were to **take heed** to themselves first, then instruction their children.

b. **Especially concerning the day:** Moses told the nation to especially tell their children about the experience in **Horeb** (that is, Mount Sinai) -

an experience most of these only knew as children, if at all.

i. At Horeb, the nation of Israel heard God speak (**I will let them hear My words**). The intention of such a personal encounter was so that they would obey God - but they did not.

c. **He declared to you His covenant:** At Mount Sinai, Israel did not only receive commandments from God; they also entered into a covenant with Him, promising to obey Him, and God promising to bless an obedient Israel (Exo. 24:1-8).

d. **You heard the sound of the words, but saw no form; you only heard a voice:** The commands at Horeb had to be obeyed. Because they saw no form of God, therefore God commanded that they must never make an image to represent Him.

i. Israel also was forbidden to worship the creation of God. Neither any **beast** or **bird** or **the sun, the moon, and the stars** are fit for our worship. This is worshipping the creature rather than the Creator (Rom. 1:25).

e. **The LORD has taken you and brought you out of the iron furnace:** Because God has delivered us, He has rights over us. He did not deliver us so we could do our own thing, but so we could do *His* thing.

3. (21-24) Moses challenges Israel to learn from the example of his own failure.

"Furthermore the LORD was angry with me for your sakes, and swore that I would not cross over the Jordan, and that I would not enter the good land which the LORD your God is giving you as an inheritance. But I must die in this land, I must not cross over the Jordan; but you shall cross over and possess that good land. Take heed to yourselves, lest you forget the covenant of the LORD your God which He made with you, and make for yourselves a carved image in the form of anything which the LORD your God has forbidden you. For the LORD your God *is* a consuming fire, a jealous God."

a. **The LORD was angry with me for your sakes:** It was for the sake of Israel that God disciplined Moses, not allowing him to enter the Promised Land. Israel needed to see that no man, not even Moses was above the Law. They also had to understand that it was indeed better that Joshua lead them into the Promised Land instead of Moses.

b. **I must die in this land . . . but you shall cross over and possess that good land:** Moses was humble enough to recognize his own sin and failure before Israel, and he had enough faith to believe that they could make it - even without him.

i. Moses knew that he was replaceable. It is a dangerous thing when anybody in the ministry begins to think they are doing something no one else can do, or that they are irreplaceable. God can and does use anyone; if a ministry does depend on one irreplaceable person, then it is of man and not of God. Moses was humble enough, and wise enough, to know this.

c. For the LORD your God is a consuming

fire: Moses' idea is simply, "If God did not spare me when I blew it, don't think He will spare you if you turn to other God. God is a consuming fire, and we must take Him and obedience to

Him seriously." The same idea is echoed in Heb. 12:29.

B. Moses warns the nation about the danger of disobedience.

1. (25-28) The price of serving other gods: exile among the nations.

"When you beget children and grandchildren and have grown old in the land, and act corruptly and make a carved image in the form of anything, and do evil in the sight of the LORD your God to provoke Him to anger, I call heaven and earth to witness against you this day, that you will soon utterly perish from the land which you cross over the Jordan to possess; you will not prolong *your* days in it, but will be utterly destroyed. And the LORD will scatter you among the peoples, and you will be left few in number among the nations where the LORD will drive you. And there you will serve gods, the work of men's hands, wood and stone, which neither see nor hear nor eat nor smell."

a. I call heaven and earth to witness

against you this day: Creation itself would testify against an idol worshipping Israel. They would be **destroyed** in the

land God promised to give them.

b. And the LORD will scatter you among

the peoples: God gave Israel the Promised Land, but not unconditionally. If they persisted in idol worship, God would remove them from the land and scatter them among the nations.

i. This, of course, is exactly what happened.

Some 550 years later, at the time of the Babylonian Exile of Judah.

c. There you will serve gods, the work of men's hands, which neither see nor hear

nor eat nor smell: If Israel was exiled, they would then get their fill of idols. God would put them in a land filled with idols.

i. Often, God's chastisement on us is to give us what our sinful hearts long for. If Israel wanted idols, God would give them idols.

2. (29-31) God's mercy to exiled Israel.

"But from there you will seek the LORD your God, and you will find *Him* if you seek Him with all your heart and with all your soul. When you are in distress, and all these things come upon you in the latter days, when you turn to the LORD your God and obey His voice (for the LORD your God *is* a merciful God), He will not forsake you nor destroy you, nor forget the covenant of your fathers which He swore to them."

a. From there you will seek the LORD your

God, and you will find Him: God would not totally abandon Israel in exile. When they were ready to turn back to the LORD, He would be ready to receive them.

b. If you seek Him with all your heart and

with all your soul: However, if Israel was to find the LORD, they had to seek Him with **all** their heart and **all** their soul.

i. In this context, to seek God with the

heart has the idea of passionately seeking Him, seeking Him because you really want to love the LORD. Seeking God with the *soul*

has the idea of seeking God with our mind, will, and emotions; with giving all of ourselves to Him.

c. When you turn to the LORD your God

and obey His voice: This shows that when we seek God with all our heart and all our soul, it will show itself in obedience.

3. (32-40) The sensibility of serving God.

"For ask now concerning the days that are past, which were before you, since the day that God created man on the earth, and *ask* from one end of heaven to the other, whether *any* great *thing* like this has happened, or *anything* like it has been heard. Did *any* people *ever* hear the voice of God speaking out of the midst of the fire, as you have heard, and live? Or did God *ever* try to go *and* take for Himself a nation from the midst of *another* nation, by trials, by signs, by wonders, by war, by a mighty hand and an outstretched arm, and by great terrors, according to all that the LORD your God did for you in Egypt before your eyes? To you it was shown, that you might know that the LORD Himself *is* God; *there is* none other besides Him. Out of heaven He let you hear His voice, that He might instruct you; on earth He showed you His great fire, and you heard His words out of the midst of the fire. And because He loved your fathers, therefore He chose their descendants after them; and He brought you out of Egypt with His Presence, with His mighty power, driving out from before you nations greater and mightier than you, to bring you in, to give you their land *as* an inheritance, as *it is* this day. Therefore know this day, and consider *it* in your heart, that the LORD Himself *is* God in heaven above and on the earth beneath; *there is* no other. You shall therefore keep His statutes and His commandments which I command you today, that it may go well with you and with your children after you, and that you may prolong *your* days in the land which the LORD your God is giving you for all time."

a. **For ask now:** Moses asked Israel to carefully consider **the days that are past**, and if God had ever dealt with any other nation the way He had dealt with Israel. Israel needed to know they had a special place in the plan of God.

b. **To you it was shown, that you might know that the LORD Himself is God:** Israel could *know* that the LORD was God, because of all the amazing things God did in the life of their nation.

i. In the same way, when we consider how God has touched our lives - how we have experienced the power to free us from sin, to give us hope when we are discouraged, to heal our bodies, to free our bitter hearts, to answer our prayers, to overcome the most difficult obstacles - when we consider these things, we can *know* that the **LORD Himself is God**.

c. **The LORD Himself is God in heaven above and on the earth beneath, there is no other:** Israel heard God's audible voice from heaven; they saw His holy fire, and benefited from His divine choice. They could know this from all God had done for them.

d. **You shall therefore keep His statutes and His commandments:** In light of who God is, and all He did for Israel, obedience to His commands made *perfect sense*. It was simply what should be done. We are fools to disobey such a God of love and power.

i. The LORD gives man the invitation: *Come now, and let us reason together, says the LORD* (Isa. 1:18). When we consider the alternatives, serving God is the only option. We often think that we have it hard serving the LORD, but we would be in an even worse place without Him. It has been said, "Democracy is the worst form of government ever created, except for all the others." We could also say, "Serving God is

the hardest way to live, except for all the other ways."

4. (41-43) Moses sets apart cities of refuge in the land east of the Jordan River.

Then Moses set apart three cities on this side of the Jordan, toward the rising of the sun, that the manslayer might flee there, who kills his neighbor unintentionally, without having hated him in time past, and that by fleeing to one of these cities he might live: Bezer in the wilderness on the plateau for the Reubenites, Ramoth in Gilead for the Gadites, and Golan in Bashan for the Manassites.

a. **Then Moses set apart three cities on this side of the Jordan:** This was part of the essential preparation for entering the Promised Land. God commanded that three cities of refuge be readied on each side of the Jordan River (Num. 35:14), and here, the three cities on the east side of the Jordan were appointed.

b. **Three cities on this side of the Jordan:** Moses could not appoint all six cities of refuge, because they had not yet taken the land on the western side of the Jordan River. Still, though he could not obey all of God's command to appoint six cities of refuge, he did what he could - and appointed the three on the east of the Jordan.

i. "Hence let us learn that, even when we cannot at once entirely carry out what God commands us to do, we are still to be by no means idle. For nothing but sheer laziness stands in our way, unless we speedily commence at God's command what it is His will to finish." (Calvin)

5. (44-49) Moses will review the commandments of God with the people of Israel.

Now this *is* the law which Moses set before the children of Israel. These *are* the testimonies, the statutes, and the judgments which Moses spoke to the children of Israel after they came out of Egypt, on this side of the Jordan, in the valley opposite Beth Peor, in the land of Sihon king of the

Amorites, who dwelt at Heshbon, whom Moses and the children of Israel defeated after they came out of Egypt. And they took

possession of his land and the land of Og king of Bashan, two kings of the Amorites, who *were* on this side of the Jordan, toward the rising of the sun, from Aroer, which *is* on the bank of the River Arnon, even to Mount Sion (that is, Hermon), and all the plain on the east side of the Jordan as far as the Sea of the Arabah, below the slopes of Pisgah.

a. This is the law which Moses set before

the children of Israel: As Moses addressed the nation they were on the threshold of the Promised Land. It had been some 38 years

since they received the Law of God at Mount Sinai and now Moses reviewed and explained the Law of God with the new generation.

b. On this side of the Jordan: If they were going to take the Promised Land, they had to be trained in God's Word. They would not take it by a do-it-yourself spirituality, but only by obedience to the eternal word of God. The same is true for us - we will never walk in the abundant life God has for us unless we do it by His word.

© 2006 David Guzik - No distribution beyond personal use without permission **2** Do not add a thing to what I command you nor subtract from it, so that you may keep the commandments of the LORD your God that I am delivering to you. **3** You have witnessed what the LORD did at Baal Peor, how he eradicated from your midst everyone who followed Baal Peor. **4** But you who remained faithful to the LORD your God are still alive to this very day, every one of you. **5**

Look! I have taught you statutes and ordinances just as the LORD my God told me to do, so that you might carry them out in the land you are about to enter and possess. **6**

So be sure to do them, because this will testify of your wise understanding to the people who will learn of all these

statutes and say, "Indeed, this great nation is a very wise people." **7** In fact, what other great nation has a god so near to them like the LORD our God whenever we call on him? **8** And what other great nation has statutes and ordinances as just as this whole law that I am about to share with you today?

9 Again, however, pay very careful attention, lest you forget the things you have seen and disregard them for the rest of your life; instead teach them to your children and grandchildren. **10** You stood before the LORD your God at Horeb and he said to me, "Assemble the people before me so that I can tell them my commands. Then they will learn to revere me all the days they live in the land, and they will instruct their children." **11** You approached and stood at the foot of the mountain, a mountain ablaze to the sky above it and yet dark with a thick cloud. **12** Then the LORD spoke to you from the middle of the fire; you heard speech but you could not see anything – only a voice was heard. **13** And he revealed to you the covenant he has commanded you to keep, the ten commandments, writing them on two stone tablets. **14**

Moreover, at that same time the LORD commanded me to teach you statutes and ordinances for you to keep in the land which you are about to enter and possess.

15 Be very careful, then, because you saw no form at the time the LORD spoke to you at Horeb from the middle of the fire. **16** I say this so you will not corrupt yourselves by making an image in the form of any kind of figure. This includes the likeness of a human male or female, **17** any kind of land animal, any bird that flies in the sky, **18**

anything that crawls on the ground, or any fish in the deep waters of the earth. **19** When you look up to the sky and see the sun, moon, and stars – the whole heavenly creation – you must not be seduced to worship and serve them, for the LORD your God has assigned them to all the people of the world. **20** You, however, the LORD has selected and brought

from Egypt, that iron-smelting furnace, to be his special people as you are today. **21** But the LORD became angry with me because of you and vowed that I would never cross the Jordan nor enter the good land that he is about to give you. **22** So I must die here in this land; I will not cross the Jordan. But you are going over and will possess that good land. **23** Be on guard so that you do not forget the covenant of the LORD

your God that he has made with you, and that you do not make an image of any kind, just as he has forbidden you.

24 For the LORD your God is a consuming fire; he is a jealous God.

25 After you have produced children and grandchildren and have been in the land a long time, if you become corrupt and make an image of any kind and do other evil things before the LORD your God that enrage him, **26** I invoke heaven and earth as witnesses against you today that you will surely and swiftly be removed from the very land you are about to cross the Jordan to possess. You will not last long there because you will surely be annihilated.

27 Then the LORD will scatter you among the peoples and there will be very few of you among the nations where the LORD will drive you. **28** There you will worship gods made by human hands – wood and stone that can neither see, hear, eat, nor smell. **29** But if you seek the LORD your God from there, you will find him, if, indeed, you seek him with all your heart and soul. **30** In your distress when all these things happen to you in the latter days, if you return to the LORD your God and obey him **31** (for he is a merciful God), he will not let you down or destroy you, for he cannot forget the covenant with your ancestors that he confirmed by oath to them.

32 Indeed, ask about the distant past, starting from the day God created humankind on the earth, and ask from one end of heaven to the other, whether there has ever been such a great thing as this, or even a rumor of it. **33**

Have a people ever heard the voice of God speaking from the middle of fire, as you yourselves have, and lived to tell about it? **34** Or has God ever before tried to deliver a nation from the middle of another nation, accompanied by judgments, signs, wonders, war, strength, power, and other very terrifying things like the LORD your God did for you in Egypt before your very eyes? **35** You have been taught that the LORD alone is God – there is no other besides him. **36** From heaven he spoke to you in order to teach you, and on earth he showed you his great fire from which you also heard his words. **37** Moreover, because he loved your ancestors, he chose their descendants who followed them and personally brought you out of Egypt with his great power **38** to dispossess nations greater and stronger than you and brought you here this day to give you their land as your property. **39** Today realize and carefully consider that the LORD is God in heaven above and on earth below – there is no other! **40** Keep his statutes and commandments that I am setting forth today so that it may go well with you and your descendants and that you may enjoy longevity in the land that the LORD

your God is about to give you as a permanent possession.

41 Then Moses selected three cities in the Transjordan, toward the east. **42** Anyone who accidentally killed someone without hating him at the time of the accident could flee to one of those cities and be safe. **43** These cities are Bezer, in the desert plateau, for the Reubenites; Ramoth in Gilead for the Gadites; and Golan in Bashan for the Manassehites.

44 This is the law that Moses set before the Israelites.

45 These are the stipulations, statutes, and ordinances that Moses spoke to the Israelites after he had brought them out of Egypt, **46** in the Transjordan, in the valley opposite Beth Peor, in the land of King Sihon of the Amorites, who lived in Heshbon. (It is he whom Moses and the Israelites attacked after they came out of Egypt. **47**

They possessed his land and that of King Og of Bashan –

both of whom were Amorite kings in the Transjordan, to the east. **48** Their territory extended from Aroer at the edge of the Arnon valley as far as Mount Siyon – that is, Hermon – **49** including all the Arabah of the Transjordan in the east to the sea of the Arabah, beneath the watershed of Pisgah.) **1** Then Moses called all the people of Israel together and said to them: “Listen, Israel, to the statutes and ordinances that I am about to deliver to you today; learn them and be careful to keep them!

Guzik - Deuteronomy 5:1-33

Deuteronomy 5 - Moses Reminds Israel of their

Covenant with God at Sinai

A. The requirements of God's covenant with Israel.

1. (1-5) The setting of the covenant.

And Moses called all Israel, and said to them:

"Hear, O Israel, the statutes and judgments which I speak in your hearing today, that you may learn them and be careful to observe them.

The LORD our God made a covenant with us in Horeb. The LORD did not make this covenant with our fathers, but with us, those who *are* here today, all of us who *are* alive. The LORD talked with you face to face on the mountain from the midst of the fire. I stood between the LORD and you at that time, to declare to you the word of the LORD; for you were afraid because of the fire, and you did not go up the mountain. *He* said:"

a. **Hear, O Israel:** Israel was bound to the covenant they agreed to in Exo. 24:1-8, yet the covenant was made with the previous generation which perished in the wilderness.

The present generation had to understand and embrace the covenant if they were to enjoy the blessings of the covenant.

b. **Made a covenant:** Literally, this is to "cut a covenant." The idea of "cutting" is associated with covenant because covenants were always sealed with sacrifice - the cutting of a sacrificial victim.

c. **The LORD did not make this covenant with our fathers, but with us:** In fact, the covenant was originally made with the previous generation, and Moses did not deny this. But he drove the point home: This was *their* covenant; it is a covenant of the living, not of the dead.

d. **The LORD talked with you face to face:** This demonstrates that the term **face to face** does not mean

"literal face to literal face," but is a Hebraic figure of speech meaning "intimate, free communication."

i. Deu. 4:12 specifically says that Israel *saw no form; you only heard a voice*. Yet they had a remarkably transparent communication with God, so the figure of speech *face to face* applies.

ii. This is why Exo. 33:11 says *So the LORD spoke to Moses face to face, as a man speaks to his friend*, and in Exo. 33:20 the LORD says, *You cannot see My face; for no man shall see Me, and live*. The use of *face to face* in Exo. 33:11 is a figure of speech, meaning Moses had free and unhindered communication with the LORD.

iii. " *Face to face* seems to mean 'in person,' that is, in the immediacy of personal contact." (Thompson)

e. I stood between the LORD and you at

that time: Israel could not bear such free and unhindered communication with the LORD, so they asked Moses to speak to God on their behalf.

2. (6-7) The first commandment: **no other gods before Me.**

I *am* the LORD your God who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage.

You shall have no other gods before Me.

a. **I am the LORD your God:** Before God commanded anything of man, He declared who He was and what He did for Israel (**who**

brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage). The foundation was clear: because of whom God was and what He did for His people, He has the right to tell us what to do - and we have the obligation to obey Him.

b. **You shall have no other gods before Me:** The first commandment logically flows from understanding who God

is and what He has done for us. Nothing is to come **before** God and He is the only God we worship and serve.

i. In the days of ancient Israel, there was great temptation to worship the gods of materialism (Baal, the god of weather and financial success) and sex (Ashtoreth, the goddess of sex, romance, and reproduction), or any number of other local deities. We are tempted to worship the same gods, but without the old-fashioned names and images.

c. **No other gods before Me:** This did not imply that it was permissible to have other gods, as long as they lined up behind the true God. Instead the idea is that there are to be no other gods before the sight of the true God in our life. **Before Me** is literally, "to My face."

i. This means God demands to be more than "added" to our lives. We don't just add Jesus to the life we already have. We must give Him all our lives.

ii. Failure to obey this commandment is called *idolatry*. We are to flee idolatry (1Co. 10:14). Those lives marked by habitual idolatry will not inherit the kingdom of God (1Co. 6:9-10, Eph. 5:5, Rev. 21:8, 22:15).

Idolatry is a work of the flesh (Gal. 5:19-20), which marks our old life instead of the new (1Pe. 4:3), and we are not to associate with

those who call themselves Christians who are idolaters (1Co. 5:11).

3. (8-10) The second commandment: **You shall not make for yourself any carved image . . . you shall not bow down to them.**

You shall not make for yourself a carved image; any likeness *of anything* that *is* in heaven above, or that *is* in the earth beneath, or that *is* in the water under the earth; you shall

not bow down to them nor serve them. For I, the LORD your God, *am* a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children to the third and fourth *generations* of those who hate Me, but showing mercy to thousands, to those who love Me and keep My commandments.

a. **You shall not make for yourself a carved image:** The second commandment prohibited not only idolatry regarding false gods, it also dealt with making an image of any created thing which we might worship.

b. **Or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth**

beneath: In that day as well as in our own, worship was tied closely with images - idealized images, or even images in the mind of man.

God will not allow us to depict Him with any such image, nor replace Him with another image.

i. The second commandment didn't forbid making an image of something for artistic purposes. God Himself commanded Israel make images of cherubim (Exo. 25:18, 26:31). It forbade the making of images as an "aid" to worship.

ii. "To countenance its *image worship*, the *Roman Catholic Church* has left the whole of this second commandment out of the decalogue, and thus lost one whole commandment out of the *ten*; but to keep up the *number* they have divided the *tenth* into *two*." (Clarke) iii. Joh. 4:24 explains the rationale behind

the second commandment: *God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth*. The use of images and other material things as a focus or "help" to worship denies who God is (*Spirit*) and how we must worship Him (*in spirit and truth*).

iv. Paul reminds us of the futility of trying to make God into our own image: *Professing to be wise, they became fools,*

and changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like corruptible man; and birds and four-footed animals and creeping things.

(Rom. 1:22-23)

c. **For I, the LORD your God, am a jealous**

God: How can it be said that God is a **jealous God**? "God's jealousy is love in action. He refuses to share the human heart with any rival, not because He is selfish and wants us all for Himself, but because He knows that upon that loyalty to Him depends our very moral life . . .

God is not jealous *of* us: He is jealous *for* us." (Redpath) d.

Visiting the iniquity of the fathers on

the children to the third and fourth

generations of those who hate Me: This

does not mean God punishes us directly for the sins of our ancestors. The important words are **of those who hate Me** - if the descendants love God, they will not have the iniquity of the fathers visited on them.

i. "This necessarily implies - IF *the children walk in the steps of their fathers*; for no man can be condemned by Divine justice for a crime of which he was never guilty." (Clarke) ii.

Yet, the focus here is on idolatry, and this refers to judgment on a *national* scale -

nations that forsake the LORD will be judged, and that judgment will have effects throughout generations.

4. (11) The third commandment: **You shall not take the name of the LORD your God in vain.**

You shall not take the name of the LORD your God in vain, for the LORD will not hold *him* guiltless who takes His name in vain.

a. **You shall not take the name of the**

LORD your God in vain: We can break the third commandment through *profanity* (using the name of God in blasphemy and cursing), *frivolity* (using the name of God in

a superficial, stupid way), and *hypocrisy* (claiming the name of God but acting in a way that disgraces Him).

i. . Jesus communicated the idea of this command in the disciple's prayer, when He taught us to have a regard for the holiness of God's name (*Hallowed be Your name*, Mat. 6:9).

b. **For the LORD will not hold him guiltless who takes His name in vain:** The strength of this command has led to strange traditions among the Jewish people. Some go to extreme

lengths in attempting to fulfill this command, refusing to even write out the name of God, in the fear that the paper might be destroyed and the name of God be written **in vain**.

5. (12-15) The fourth commandment: **Remember the Sabbath day.**

Observe the Sabbath day, to keep it holy, as the LORD your God commanded you. Six days you shall labor and do all your work, but the seventh day *is* the Sabbath of the LORD your God. *In it* you shall do no work: you, nor your son, nor your daughter, nor your male servant, nor your female servant, nor your ox, nor your donkey, nor any of your cattle, nor your stranger who *is* within your gates, that your male servant and your female servant may rest as well as you. And remember

that you were a slave in the land of Egypt, and the LORD your God brought you out from there by a mighty hand and by an outstretched arm;

therefore the LORD your God commanded you to keep the Sabbath day.

a. **Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy:** The seventh day (Saturday) was

commanded to be respected as a day of rest.

This rest was for all of Israel - servants and slaves as well as visitors.

i. This is an important principle that might be too easily passed over. Here God declared the essential humanity and dignity of

women, slaves, and strangers, and said they had the same right to a day of rest as the free Israeli man. This was certainly a radical concept in the ancient world.

ii. In fact, in Moses' exposition of the Law here in Deuteronomy, he pays special stress on the fact that the Sabbath is for the foreign-born slaves among Israel. Deu. 5:15

(And remember that you were a slave in the land of Egypt) is not cited in Exodus 20.

b. **To keep it holy:** In their traditions, the Jewish people came to carefully quantify what they thought could and could not be done on

the Sabbath day, in order to **keep it holy**.

i. For example, in Luk. 6:1-2, in the mind of the Jewish leaders, the disciples were guilty of four violations of the Sabbath every time they took a bite of grain out in the field, because they reaped, threshed, winnowed, and prepared food.

ii. Ancient Rabbis taught that on the Sabbath, a man could not carry something in his right hand or in his left hand, across his chest or on his shoulder. But he could carry something with the back of his hand, his

foot, his elbow, or in his ear, his hair, or in the hem of his shirt, or in his shoe or sandal.

Or, on the Sabbath, you Israelites were forbidden to tie a knot - except, a woman could tie a knot in her girdle. So, if a bucket of water had to be raised from a well, an Israelite could not tie a rope to the bucket,

but a woman could tie her girdle to the

bucket and pull it up from the well.

iii. In observant Jewish homes today, one cannot turn on a light, a stove, or a switch on the Sabbath. It is forbidden to drive a certain distance or to make a telephone call - all carefully regulated by traditions seeking to spell out the law exactly.

c. For in six days the LORD made the heavens and the earth: God established the pattern for the Sabbath at the time of creation.

When He rested from His works on the seventh day, God made the seventh day a day of rest from all our works (Gen. 2:3). But the most important purpose of the Sabbath was to serve as a shadow of the rest we have in Jesus.

i. Some claim that Christians are required to keep the Sabbath today. But the New Testament makes it clear that Christians are not under obligation to observe a Sabbath day (Col. 2:16-17 and Gal. 4:9-11), because Jesus fulfilled the purpose and plan of the Sabbath *for* us and *in* us (Heb. 4:9-11).

ii. Gal. 4:10 tells us that Christians are not bound to observe *days and months and seasons and years*. The rest we enter into as Christians is something to experience every day, not just one day a week - the rest of knowing we don't have to work to save ourselves, but our salvation is accomplished in Jesus (Heb. 4:9-10).

iii. The Sabbath commanded here and observed by Israel was a *shadow of things to come, but the substance is of Christ* (Col. 2:16-17). We have a rest in Jesus that is ours to live in every day. Therefore, since the shadow of the Sabbath is fulfilled in Jesus, we are free to keep any day - or no

day - as a Sabbath after the custom of ancient Israel.

iv. However, though we are free from the legal obligation of the Sabbath, we dare not ignore the importance of a day of rest - God has built us so that we *need* one. Like a car that needs regular maintenance, we need regular rest - or we will not "wear" well.

Some people are like high mileage cars that haven't been maintained well, and it shows.

v. Some Christians are also dogmatic about observing Saturday as the Sabbath as opposed to Sunday. But because we are free to regard all days as given to God, it makes no difference. But in some ways, Sunday is more appropriate; being the day Jesus rose from the dead (Mar. 16:9), and first met with His disciples (Joh. 20:19), and a day when Christians gathered for fellowship (Act. 20:7 and 1Co. 16:2). Under Law, men worked towards God's rest; but after Jesus' finished work on the cross, the believer enters into rest and goes from that rest out to work.

vi. But we are also commanded to *work* six days. "He who idles his time away in the *six* days is equally culpable in the sight of God as he who works on the *seventh*." (Clarke) Many Christians should give more "leisure time" to the work of the LORD. Every Christian should have a *deliberate* *will* to serve God and advance the Kingdom of Jesus Christ.

6. (16) The fifth commandment: **honor your father and your mother.**

Honor your father and your mother, as the LORD your God has commanded you, that your days may be long, and that it may be well with you in the land which the LORD your God is giving you.

a. **Honor your father and your mother:**

Honor for fathers and mothers is an essential building block for the stability and health of all society. If the younger generations are constantly at war with older generations, the foundations of society will be destroyed.

i. Jesus used the way the Pharisees interpreted this commandment as an example of how one might keep the law with a limited interpretation, yet violate the spirit of the commandment (Mat. 15:3-6).

b. **That your days may be long:** In Eph. 6:2 Paul repeated this command, emphasizing the promise stated here: **that your days may be long upon the land**. Rebellion is costly, and many have paid a high price personally for their rebellion against their parents.

7. (17) The sixth commandment: **You shall not murder**.
You shall not murder.

a. **You shall not murder:** Some wonder how God can approve both capital punishment (Exo. 19:12) and this prohibition of murder. The simple answer is that in Hebrew as well as English, there is a distinction between *to kill* and *to murder*. As opposed to killing, **murder** is the taking of life without legal justification (execution after due process) or moral justification (killing in defense).

b. **You shall not murder:** Jesus carefully explained the heart of this commandment. He showed that it also prohibits us from hating someone else (Mat. 5:21-26), because we can wish someone dead in our hearts, yet never have the "courage" to commit the deed. Someone may not kill from a lack of courage or initiative, though his or her heart is filled with hatred.

8. (18) The seventh commandment: **You shall not commit adultery.**

You shall not commit adultery.

a. **You shall not commit adultery:** Recognize that the *act itself* is condemned. God allows no justification for the ways that many people often seek to justify extra-marital sex, such as saying "my partner doesn't understand me" or "we are in love" or "God led us to be with each other" or any other excuse.

i. Michael English, who lost his recording contract and marriage over adultery with another Christian music singer, says of his adultery and its aftermath: "Maybe God allowed this to happen to make me see I needed some freedom." *No!*

b. **You shall not commit adultery:** The New Testament clearly condemns adultery: *Now the works of the flesh are evident, which are: adultery, fornication uncleanness, licentiousness . . .* (Gal. 5:19). But more than the act itself, Jesus carefully explained the heart of this commandment. It prohibits us from looking *at a woman to lust for her*, where we commit adultery in our heart or mind, yet may not have the courage or opportunity to do the act (Mat. 5:27-30). We aren't innocent just because we didn't have the opportunity to sin the way we really wanted to.

9. (19) The eighth commandment: **You shall not steal.**

You shall not steal.

a. **Not steal:** This command is another important foundation for human society, establishing the right to personal property. God has clearly entrusted certain possessions to certain individuals, and other people or states are not permitted to take that property without due process of law.

b. **Not steal:** We can also steal from God. Of course, this demands we honor God with our financial resources, so we

are not guilty of robbing Him (Mal. 3:8-10). But we can also rob God by refusing to give Him ourselves for obedience and His service, because He bought us and owns us: *knowing that you were not redeemed with corruptible things, like silver or gold . . . but with the precious blood of Christ (1Pe. 1:18-19); For you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's (1Co. 6:20).*

c. **Not steal:** Eph. 4:28 gives the solution to stealing. *Let him who stole steal no longer, but rather let him labor, working with his hands what is good, that he may have something to give him who has need.*

10. (20) The ninth commandment: **You shall not bear false witness.**

You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.

a. **You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor:** We can break the ninth commandment through slander, talebearing, creating false impressions, by silence, by questioning the motives behind someone's actions, or even by flattery.

i. "Slander . . . is a lie invented and spread with intent to do harm. That is the worst form of injury a person can do to another.

Compared to one who does this, a gangster is a gentleman, and a murderer is kind, because he ends life in a moment with a stroke and with little pain. But the man guilty of slander ruins a reputation which may never be regained, and causes lifelong suffering." (Redpath)

ii. "Talebearing . . . is repeating a report about a person without careful investigation.

Many, many times I have known what it is to

suffer with that. To repeat a story which brings discredit and dishonor to another person without making sure of the facts, is breaking this commandment . . . How many people, especially Christian people, revel in this, and delight in working havoc by telling tales about others. To excuse the action by saying they believed the report to be true, or that there was no intention to malign, is no justification." (Redpath)

iii. What about inappropriate silence? "When someone utters a falsity about another and a third person is present who knows that

statement to be untrue but, for reasons of fear or being disliked, remains quiet, that third person is as guilty of breaking this law as if he had told a lie." (Redpath) b. **You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor:** The New Testament puts it simply. *Do not lie to one another, since you have put off the old man with his deeds* (Col.

3:9) "How very strange that we have ever come to think that Christian maturity is shown by the ability to speak our minds, whereas it is really expressed in controlling our tongues." (Redpath) i. "What a startling revelation it would be if a tape recording could be played of all that every church member has said about his

fellow members in one week!" (Redpath)

ii. Satan is always there to encourage a lie (Joh. 8:44; Act. 5:3); and Jesus Himself was the victim of *false witness* (Mar. 14:57); in some ways, we might say this was the sin that sent Jesus to the cross.

11. (21) The tenth commandment: **You shall not covet.**

You shall not covet your neighbor's wife; and you shall not desire your neighbor's house, his field, his male servant, his female servant, his ox, his donkey, or anything that *is* your neighbor's.

a. **You shall not covet:** All the first nine commands focus more on things we do; the tenth deals straight with the heart and its desires.

i. Literally, the word for "**covet**" here means "to pant after." Covetousness works like this: the eyes look upon an object, the mind admires it, the will goes over to it, and the body moves in to possess it. Just because you have not taken the final step does not mean you are not in the process of coveting right now.

b. **Your neighbor's house . . . wife . . . ox . .**

. **donkey:** Covetousness can be expressed towards all sorts of things; it is the itch to have and to possess what someone else has. It speaks of a dissatisfaction with what we have, and a jealousy towards those who have something "better."

i. Heb. 13:5 puts it well: *Let your conduct be without covetousness; be content with such things as you have. For He Himself has said, "I will never leave you nor forsake you."*

ii. This last commandment is closely connected with the first commandment against idolatry: *For this you know, that no .*

. . covetous man, who is an idolater, has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God (Eph. 5:5).

iii. Jesus gave a special warning about covetousness, which explained the core philosophy of the covetous heart: *And He said to them, "Take heed and beware of covetousness, for one's life does not consist in the abundance of the things he possesses."* (Luk. 12:15)

B. The response of Israel and the response of God at Mount Sinai.

1. (22-27) The response of Israel: shrinking fear.

"These words the LORD spoke to all your

assembly, in the mountain from the midst of the fire, the cloud, and the thick darkness, with a loud voice; and He added no more. And He wrote them on two tablets of stone and gave them to me. So it was, when you heard the voice from

the midst of the darkness, while the mountain was burning with fire, that you came near to me, all the heads of your tribes and your elders. And you said: 'Surely the LORD our God has shown us His glory and His greatness, and we have heard His voice from the midst of the fire. We have seen this day that God speaks with man; yet he *still* lives. Now therefore, why should we die? For this great fire will consume us; if we hear the voice of the LORD our God anymore, then we shall die. For who *is there* of all flesh who has heard the voice of the living God speaking from the midst of the fire, as we *have*, and lived? You go near and hear all that the LORD our God may say, and tell us all that the LORD our God says to you, and we will hear and do *it*.'

a. In the mountain from the midst of the fire, the cloud, and the thick darkness,

with a loud voice: The whole scene was indeed awesome: **The LORD spoke;** there was **fire**, a **cloud**, **thick darkness**, a **loud voice**; and it all made such an impression on Israel that they asked Moses to not have God speak to them so directly any more.

i. Why should we die? . . . if we hear the voice of the LORD our God

anymore, then we shall die makes it plain. The Mount Sinai experience was not one of sweet fellowship with God. The message of Mount Sinai was not "come unto Me," but "stay away, for I am holy and you are not."

ii. This is exactly the message of the writer to the Hebrews in Heb. 12:18-24: We, under the New Covenant, *have not* come to Mount Sinai and the message "stay away"; we have come to Mount Zion, where

God's message is "come unto Me."

b. Tell us all that the LORD our God says to you, and we will hear and do it: Israel was far too confident in their ability to keep the law of God. Their experience at Mount Sinai convinced them of God's glory, but not of their own corruption and inability.

2. (28-33) God responds with hopeful pleasure in Israel.

"Then the LORD heard the voice of your words when you spoke to me, and the LORD said to me: 'I have heard the voice of the words of this people which they have spoken to you. They are right *in* all that they have spoken. Oh, that they had such a heart in them that they would fear Me and always keep all My commandments, that it might be well with them and with their children forever! Go and say to them, "Return to your tents." But as for you, stand here by Me, and I will speak to you all the commandments, the statutes, and the judgments which you shall teach them, that they may observe *them* in the land which I am giving them to possess.'

Therefore you shall be careful to do as the LORD your God has commanded you; you shall not turn aside to the right hand or to the left. You shall walk in all the ways which the LORD your God has commanded you, that you may live and *that it may be* well with you, and *that* you may prolong *your* days in the land which you shall possess."

a. They are right in all they have spoken: God was pleased with Israel's response. Their response was evidence that they took Him seriously.

b. Oh, that they had such a heart: The feeling is that God liked what He saw in Israel, but "hoped" (to use a figure of speech, because God doesn't "hope" for things the way we do) that they would *keep* the same attitude of heart. In fact, Israel did not keep this heart; not 40 days later they danced in worship around a golden calf.

c. That it might be well with them and

their children forever! This is God's motive in calling for our obedience - **that it might be well** with us. Every command of God is rooted in love for us, not some obsessive desire for control, or mean-spirited attitude towards us.

d. Therefore you shall be careful to do as the LORD your God has commanded you:

Knowing the glory of God (as revealed at Mount Sinai) and the love of God (as revealed by His longing **that it might be well with them**), gave them all the more reason to obey God.

i. When we have trouble obeying God, we are clearly lacking in one or both of these areas. Either we forget His glory or we forget His love for us, or we forget both of them.

© 2006 David Guzik - No distribution beyond personal use without permission **2** The LORD our God made a covenant with us at Horeb.

3 He did not make this covenant with our ancestors but with us, we who are here today, all of us living now. **4** The LORD spoke face to face with you at the mountain, from the middle of the fire. **5** (I was standing between the LORD and you at that time to reveal to you the message of the LORD, because you were afraid of the fire and would not go up the mountain.) He said: **6** "I am the LORD your God, he who brought you from the land of Egypt, from the place of slavery. **7** You must not have any other gods besides me. **8** You must not make for yourself an image of anything in heaven above, on earth below, or in the waters beneath. **9** You must not worship or serve them, for I, the LORD your God, am a jealous God. I punish the sons, grandsons, and great-grandsons for the sin of the fathers who reject me, **10** but I show covenant faithfulness to the thousands who choose me and keep my commandments. **11** You must not make use of the name of the LORD your God for worthless purposes, for the LORD will not exonerate anyone who

abuses his name that way. **12** Be careful to observe the Sabbath day just as the LORD your God has commanded you. **13** You are to work and do all your tasks in six days, **14** but the seventh day is the Sabbath of the LORD your God. On that day you must not do any work, you, your son, your daughter, your male slave, your female slave, your ox, your donkey, any other animal, or the foreigner who lives with you, so that your male and female slaves, like yourself, may have rest. **15** Recall that you were slaves in the land of Egypt and that the LORD your God brought you out of there by strength and power. That is why the LORD your God has commanded you to observe the Sabbath day. **16** Honor your father and your mother just as the LORD your God has commanded you to do, so that your days may be extended and that it may go well with you in the land that he is about to give you. **17** You must not murder. **18** You must not commit adultery. **19**

You must not steal. **20** You must not offer false testimony against another. **21** You must not desire another man's wife, nor should you crave his house, his field, his male and female servants, his ox, his donkey, or anything else he owns."

22 The LORD said these things to your entire assembly at the mountain from the middle of the fire, the cloud, and the darkness with a loud voice, and that was all he said.

Then he inscribed the words on two stone tablets and gave them to me. **23** Then, when you heard the voice from the midst of the darkness while the mountain was ablaze, all your tribal leaders and elders approached me.

24 You said, "The LORD our God has shown us his great glory and we have heard him speak from the middle of the fire. It is now clear to us that God can speak to human beings and they can keep on living. **25** But now, why should we die, because this intense fire will consume us! If we keep hearing the voice of the LORD our God we will die! **26** Who is there from the entire human race who has heard the voice

of the living God speaking from the middle of the fire as we have, and has lived? **27** You go near so that you can hear everything the LORD our God is saying and then you can tell us whatever he says to you; then we will pay attention and do it.” **28** When the LORD heard you speaking to me, he said to me, “I have heard what these people have said to you – they have spoken well. **29** If only it would really be their desire to fear me and obey all my commandments in the future, so that it may go well with them and their descendants forever. **30** Go and tell them, ‘Return to your tents!’ **31** But as for you, remain here with me so I can declare to you all the commandments, statutes, and ordinances that you are to teach them, so that they can carry them out in the land I am about to give them.” **32** Be careful, therefore, to do exactly what the LORD your God has commanded you; do not turn right or left! **33** Walk just as he has commanded you so that you may live, that it may go well with you, and that you may live long in the land you are going to possess.

1 Now these are the commandments, statutes, and ordinances that the LORD your God instructed me to teach you so that you may carry them out in the land where you are headed

Guzik - Deuteronomy 6:1-25

Deuteronomy 6 - Moses Reminds Israel of the

Commandment and the Warning

A. The Commandment: The essence of God's law.

1. (1-3) Remember the commandment before entering Canaan.

Now this *is* the commandment, *and these are* the statutes and judgments which the LORD your God has commanded to teach you, that you may observe *them* in the land which you are crossing over to possess, that you may fear the LORD

your God, to keep all His statutes and His commandments which I command you, you and your son and your grandson, all the days of your life, and that your days may be prolonged.

Therefore hear, O Israel, and be careful to observe *it*, that it may be well with you, and that you may multiply greatly as the LORD God of your fathers has promised you; "a land flowing with milk and honey."

a. **Now this is the commandment:** The Hebrew is emphatic here. Moses called attention to **The Commandment**. In the following verses, God reduced the law to one ruling principle - one commandment which encompassed all the commandments.

b. **That your days may be prolonged . . .**

that it may be well with you: Israel's fate rested on their obedience to this one great commandment. If they obeyed their

commandment, their life would be long and filled with blessing. If they did not obey they could expect to be cursed by God.

2. (4-5) The great commandment: **Love the LORD**

your God.

Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD *is* one! You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength.

a. **Hear, O Israel:** In Hebrew, these verses are known as the *Shema* ("hear" in Hebrew). It is the classic Hebrew confession of faith, describing who God is and what our duty is towards Him.

b. **The LORD our God, the LORD is one!**

This is the essential truth about God. He is a person and not a vague pantheistic force. Being **one**, He cannot be represented by contradictory images. Since **the LORD our God** is **one**, He is not Baal, or Ashtoreth - He is the LORD God, and they are not.

i. In the mind of many Jewish people, this verse alone disqualified the New Testament teaching that Jesus is God, and the New Testament teaching of the Trinity - that there is one God, existing in three Persons.

At some times and places, as Jewish synagogues said the *Shema* together, and when the word **one** (*echad*) was said, they loudly and strongly repeated that one word for several minutes, as if it were a rebuke to Christians who believed in the Trinity.

ii. Christians must come to a renewed understanding of the unity of God. They must appreciate the fact that **the LORD is one**, not three, as 1Co. 8:6 says: *yet for us there is one God*. We worship *one* God, existing in *three* persons, not three separate gods.

iii. Yet, the statement **the LORD is one** certainly does not contradict the truth of the Trinity. In fact, it establishes that truth. The Hebrew word for **one** is *echad*, which speaks most

literally of a compound unity, instead of using the Hebrew word *yacheed*, which speaks of an absolute unity or singularity (Gen. 22:2 and Psa. 25:16).

iv. The very first use of *echad* in the Bible is in Gen. 1:5: *So the evening and the morning were the first day*. Even here, we see a unity (one day) with the idea of plurality (made up of evening and morning). Gen. 2:24 uses

echad in saying *the two shall become one flesh*. Again, the idea of a unity (one flesh), making a plurality (the two). In Exo. 26:6

and 11, the fifty gold clasps are used to hold the curtains together so the tent would be *one* (*echad*) - a unity (one) made up of a plurality (the many parts of the tabernacle).

In Eze. 37:17 the LORD tells Ezekiel to join

together two sticks (prophetically

representing Ephraim and Judah) into *one* (*echad*), speaking again of a unity (one stick) made up of a plurality (the two sticks).

There is no way that *echad* has the exclusive idea of an absolute singularity; the idea of One God in Three Persons fits just fine with

the term *echad*.

c. **The LORD our God:** In addition, even the name of **God** in this line suggests the plurality of God. The Hebrew word is *Elohim* and grammatically, it is a plural word used as if it were singular - the verbs and pronouns used with it are generally in the plural.

i. Rabbi Simeon ben Joachi, commenting on

the word *Elohim*: "Come and see the mystery of the word *Elohim*; there are *three degrees*, and each degree by itself *alone*, and yet notwithstanding they are all *one*, and *joined together* in *one*, and are not divided from each other." Clarke adds: "He must be strangely prejudiced indeed who cannot see that the doctrine of a Trinity, and of a Trinity in unity, is expressed in the above words."

ii. Leupold quoting Luther on *Elohim*: "But we have clear testimony that Moses aimed to indicate the Trinity or the three persons in the one divine nature."

d. **Love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your might:** Knowing who God is enables us to act towards Him rightly. We give Him His due.

i. God wants a complete love from us. This love is appropriate because He loved us completely: *We love Him because He first loved us* (1Jo. 4:19).

ii. What God most wants from us is our **love**. We often think God demands a hundred other things from us - our money, our time, our effort, our will, our submission, and so forth - but what God really wants is our love. When we really love the LORD with all of our heart, soul, and mind, then everything else is freely given to the LORD. If we give the LORD all the rest - money, time, effort, will, and so forth - without giving Him our love, it is all wasted - and perhaps, all is lost.

iii. Jesus called this *the great commandment* (Mat. 22:37-38); and He said the second commandment, *you shall love your neighbor as yourself*, was like this first, great commandment. When we love the LORD our God with all our heart, soul, and mind, we will find it easy to love our neighbor as ourselves.

3. (6-9) The continual reminder of the Law. And these words which I command you today shall be in your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise

up. You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes.

You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.

a. These words which I command you

today shall be in your heart: This great command must first be in our **heart**. Then it must be communicated to our **children**, the topic of our conversation, and should always be in front of us - as near as our hand or our forehead, as ever before us as our door posts and gates.

b. You shall bind them as a sign on your hand: By the time of Jesus the Jewish people based the practice of wearing phylacteries on this passage. Phylacteries are small boxes

holding parchment with scriptures on them, held to the forehead or hand with leather straps.

i. Jesus condemned abuse of the wearing of phylacteries among the Pharisees; they would make their phylactery boxes large and ostentatious as a display of greater spirituality (Mat. 23:5).

ii. In the end times, there will be a Satanic imitation of this practice, when the number of the Antichrist will be applied to either the hand or forehead of all who will take it (Rev. 13:16).

c. You shall write them on the doorposts of your houses: This command leads to the Jewish practice of the *mezuzah*. This is a small container holding a passage of Scripture that is nailed to a doorpost.

B. The danger of disobedience.

1. (10-12) The danger of leaving God in times of prosperity. So it shall be, when the LORD your God brings you into the land of which He swore to your

fathers, to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, to give you large and beautiful cities which you did not build, houses full of all good things, which you did not fill, hewn-out wells which you did not dig, vineyards and olive trees which you did not plant; when you have eaten and are full; *then* beware, lest you forget the LORD who brought you out of the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage.

a. **To give you large and beautiful cities which you did not build:** God planned to bring Israel into an abundant, prepared land. In this abundant blessing God had for Israel, there was an inherent danger: That they would **forget the LORD who brought you out of the land of Egypt.**

b. **Lest you forget the LORD:** This cycle would be repeated through the history of Israel, especially in the time of the Judges. God would bless an obedient Israel, and they would prosper; they would begin to set their heart on the blessings instead of the LORD who blessed them; God would allow chastisement to turn

Israel's focus back upon Him; Israel would repent and obey again, and God would again bless and obedient Israel and they would prosper.

i. We usually fail to appreciate the danger of success and prosperity; we agree there is a *theoretical* danger in those things, but rarely think it applies to us.

ii. It is just a lot easier to **forget the LORD**

your brought you out . . . from the

house of bondage when there are no circumstances forcing you to remember Him.

2. (13-19) How to avoid apostasy in times of prosperity: honoring the LORD in everything we do.

You shall fear the LORD your God and serve Him, and shall take oaths in His name. You shall not go after other gods, the gods of the peoples who *are* all around you (for the LORD your God *is* a jealous God among you), lest the anger of the LORD your God be aroused against you and

destroy you from the face of the earth. You shall not tempt the LORD your God as you tempted *Him* in Massah. You shall diligently keep the commandments of the LORD your God, His testimonies, and His statutes which He has commanded you. And you shall do *what is* right and good in the sight of the LORD, that it may be well with you, and that you may go in and possess the good land of which the LORD swore

to your fathers, to cast out all your enemies from before you, as the LORD has spoken.

a. **You shall fear the LORD your God and serve Him:**

When we do this, the idea is not of a shrinking fear from an angry God. Instead, the idea of **fear** is more in the concept of an awe-filled respect, an inner repulsion at the idea of offending such a great, loving God who has done so much for us.

i. This is the passage of Scripture Jesus quoted back to Satan when tempted by Satan to avoid the cross and win back the world, if He would only bow down and worship Satan. Jesus rightly replies, based on the truth **You shall fear the LORD**

your God and serve *Him* that it was only right to fear, and worship, and serve God -

and it was wrong to bow down to Satan, no matter what might be given Him in return (Mat. 4:8-10).

b. **And shall take oaths in His name:** although the concept of the oath in God's name can certainly be abused (as Jesus pointed out in Mat. 5:33-37), there certainly is a permissible use of oaths by those who follow God - since God Himself uses oaths (Heb. 6:13). Here, Israel is being told "you are to swear an oath only in the name of the LORD, not in the name of any other god."

c. **You shall not tempt the LORD your God as you tempted Him at Massah:** In Exo.

17:1-7, Israel tempted the LORD by doubting His love and concern for them. This was tempting or testing God regarding His love for Israel, something that is not only high-handed against the LORD (because we have no right to administer a test to the Almighty) but also disregarding His previous, and constant demonstrations of love and care for Israel (by demanding that God prove His love for them now by giving them what they want).

i. Anytime we deny God's love for us, or demand He do something for us, we are testing Him as if He must answer to our standards, and tempting Him to judge us.

ii. This is the passage of Scripture which Jesus quoted back to Satan in the wilderness, when tempted to make God the Father prove His love for the Son by spectacularly protecting Jesus if He should jump off the pinnacle of the temple (Mat.

4:5-7). Jesus knew it was wrong to demand this sort of "proof" from His Father, since every day was proof of God the Father's love for the Son!

d. And you shall do what is right . . . that it may be well with you: This theme is constantly repeated. Under the Old Covenant,

Israel's blessing was based on their obedience. When they obeyed they would be blessed; when they disobeyed they would be cursed.

i. This is not the source of blessing in the New Covenant. In the New Covenant, we are blessed by faith in Jesus, since He fulfills the law in our place (Rom. 8:3-4). The watchwords for blessing under the Old

Covenant were *earning* and *deserving*; under the New Covenant, blessing comes by *believing* and *receiving*.

ii. The New Covenant system works because when we receive the New Covenant, God sends with it an inner transformation, where the law of God and the desire to do His will is now written on our hearts. Through the New Covenant, God makes us "safe" for His grace by this inner transformation.

iii. Under the New Covenant there is no *judgment* from God for our disobedience, because all the judgment we deserved was put upon Jesus at the cross. However, there may be *correction* from the hand of a loving God the Father (not in the sense of making us pay for our sin, but in the sense of training us not to continue in sin), and there are the *natural consequences* of our disobedience, which God has not promised to shield us from.

iv. Christians who fear the "freedom" of a New Covenant relationship with God must ask this question: did Israel come to great obedience to God through the Old Covenant? Does the system of earning and deserving blessing make us truly more godly than the system of believing and receiving? Or does it leave us either in total desperation (where one can then look to Jesus), or in total pride in our own works before God (as were the religious leaders of Jesus' day who had a significant hand in crucifying Him)?

3. (20-25) How to avoid apostasy in times of prosperity: Teach your children to understand and honor the LORD.

When your son asks you in time to come, saying,

"What *is the meaning of* the testimonies, the statutes, and the judgments which the LORD our God has commanded you?" then you shall say to your son: "We were slaves of Pharaoh in Egypt, and the LORD brought us out of Egypt with a mighty hand; and the LORD showed signs and wonders before our eyes, great and severe, against Egypt, Pharaoh, and all his household. Then He brought us out from there, that He might bring us in, to give us the land of which He swore to our fathers. And the LORD commanded us to observe all these statutes, to fear the LORD our God, for our good always, that He might preserve us alive, as *it is* this day. Then it will be righteousness for us, if we are careful to observe all these commandments before the LORD our God, as He has commanded us."

a. When your son asks you in time to

come: Often, the apostasy which comes from prosperity afflicts the next generation more than the present. They grow up *expecting* such prosperity and blessing, without understanding the repentance and walk with God which led to the prosperity.

b. Then you shall say to your son: Therefore, it was essential for Israel to teach and warn their children, so that the blessings given to one generation would not become a curse to the next generation.

i. Key to the teaching was the simple recounting of Israel's testimony - how God saved them from the bondage of Egypt.

Parents need to relate to their children how *they* came to a personal relationship with Jesus, so the children understand that *they* must come to the same relationship.

c. It will be righteousness for us, if we are careful to observe all these commandments: If one will obtain true righteousness through the law, it is simple

(though not easy): observe all the commandments. But if you are lacking in observing any commandment, then you need the atonement of a Perfect Sacrifice - Jesus

Christ, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.

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2 and that you may so revere the LORD your God that you will keep all his statutes and commandments that I am giving you - you, your children, and your grandchildren - all your lives, to prolong your days.

3 Pay attention, Israel, and be careful to do this so that it may go well with you and that you may increase greatly in number - as the LORD, God of your ancestors, said to you, you will have a land flowing with milk and honey.

4 Listen, Israel: The LORD is our God, the LORD is one!

5 You must love the LORD your God with your whole mind, your whole being, and all your strength.

6 These words I am commanding you today must be kept in mind, **7** and you must teach them to your children and speak of them as you sit in your house, as you walk along the road, as you lie down, and as you get up. **8** You should tie them as a reminder on your forearm and fasten them as symbols on your forehead. **9** Inscribe them on the doorframes of your houses and gates.

10 Then when the LORD your God brings you to the land he promised your ancestors Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob to give you - a land with large, fine cities you did not build, **11** houses filled with choice things you did not accumulate, hewn out cisterns you did not dig, and vineyards and olive groves you did not plant - and you eat your fill, **12** be careful not to forget the LORD who brought you out of Egypt, that place of slavery. **13** You must revere the LORD your God, serve him, and take oaths using only his name. **14** You must not go after other gods, those of the surrounding peoples, **15** for the LORD your God, who is present among

you, is a jealous God and his anger will erupt against you and remove you from the land.

16 You must not put the LORD your God to the test as you did at Massah. **17** Keep his commandments very carefully, as well as the stipulations and statutes he commanded you to observe. **18** Do whatever is proper and good before the LORD so that it may go well with you and that you may enter and occupy the good land that he promised your ancestors, **19** and that you may drive out all your enemies just as the LORD said.

20 When your children ask you later on, “What are the stipulations, statutes, and ordinances that the LORD our God commanded you?” **21** you must say to them, “We were Pharaoh’s slaves in Egypt, but the LORD brought us out of Egypt in a powerful way. **22** And he brought signs and great, devastating wonders on Egypt, on Pharaoh, and on his whole family before our very eyes. **23** He delivered us from there so that he could give us the land he had promised our ancestors. **24** The LORD commanded us to obey all these statutes and to revere him so that it may always go well for us and he may preserve us, as he has to this day. **25** We will be innocent if we carefully keep all these commandments before the LORD our God, just as he demands.”

1 When the LORD your God brings you to the land that you are going to occupy and forces out many nations before you – Hittites, Girgashites, Amorites, Canaanites, Perizzites, Hivites, and Jebusites, seven nations more numerous and powerful than you – Guzik - Deuteronomy 7:1-26

Deuteronomy 7 - Commands to Conquer and

Obey

A. The Conquest of the Canaanites is commanded.

1. (1-5) The command to completely destroy the Canaanites and their culture.

When the LORD your God brings you into the land which you go to possess, and has cast out many nations before you, the Hittites and the Girgashites and the Amorites and the Canaanites and the Perizzites and the Hivites and the Jebusites, seven nations greater and mightier

than you, and when the LORD your God delivers them over to you, you shall conquer them *and* utterly destroy them. You shall make no covenant with them nor show mercy to them. Nor shall you make marriages with them. You shall not give your daughter to their son, nor take their

daughter for your son. For they will turn your sons away from following Me, to serve other gods; so the anger of the LORD will be aroused against you and destroy you suddenly. But thus you shall deal with them: you shall destroy their altars, and break down their *sacred* pillars, and cut down their wooden images, and burn their carved images with fire.

a. **When the LORD your God:** Israel wasn't in the land yet, but Moses still instructed them as if it were a certainty. This was based on the faithful promise of God, but it was also according to His principle of *preparation*. God prepares us before He brings us into a place.

b. **Greater and mightier than you:** "Sure,"

Moses said, "the Canaanite nations are **greater and mightier than you**. But they are not **greater and mightier** than God." God brought Israel to face a challenge that was impossible in their own strength - but entirely possible in Him.

c. **When the LORD your God delivers them**

over to you: Not "if," but ***when***. God could be counted on.

d. **You shall conquer them and utterly**

destroy them: Yet, God would not do it all for them. The extent of the work would depend on their faithful response to what God would do.

i. **Utterly destroy them . . . nor show**

mercy to them: This principle of battle until absolute victory is the key to victory as we take the Promised Land of blessing and peace God has for us in Jesus. We show no mercy to our enemies in the land, but we destroy them utterly. Many of us, truth be told, simply do not want to completely destroy the sins which keep us from God's Promised Land of blessing and peace - we want to weaken them, and have some control over them, but we do not want to **utterly destroy them**.

e. **Destroy their altars, and break down their sacred pillars, and cut down their wooden images, and burn their carved**

images: We are especially to destroy anything which would lead us into a false or foreign worship.

i. This radical, complete destruction was important because of the depraved nature of the worship of the Canaanites, who worshipped male and female gods of sex and who practiced human sacrifice with their own children.

2. (6-8) Conquer them completely because the LORD loves you.

For you *are* a holy people to the LORD your God; the LORD your God has chosen you to be a people for Himself, a special treasure above all the peoples on the face of the earth. The LORD did not set His love on you nor choose you

because you were more in number than any other people, for you were the least of all peoples; but because the LORD loves you, and because He would keep the oath which He swore to your fathers, the LORD has brought you out with a mighty hand, and redeemed you from the house of bondage, from the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt.

a. For you are a holy people to the LORD

your God: Israel was holy in their *standing* before God before they were holy in their *conduct*. They were set apart unto God by His choosing (**God has chosen you to be a people for Himself**), and were *then* called to live as chosen people.

b. The LORD did not set His love on you nor choose you because you were more in number:

As much as anything, their election meant the LORD **set His love on** them. Their motivation for such a total obedience was to be that they knew they were loved by God.

i. This is the great motivation for obedience: knowing and walking in the love of God.

When we really believe God loves us, and live with that belief as a conscious fact, we find it so much easier to obey - and to utterly destroy anything that would damage that relationship of love.

3. (9-11) Conquer them completely because you serve a God of justice.

Therefore know that the LORD your God, He *is* God, the faithful God who keeps covenant and mercy for a thousand generations with those who love Him and keep His commandments; and He repays those who hate Him to their face, to

destroy them. He will not be slack with him who hates Him; He will repay him to his face.

Therefore you shall keep the commandment, the statutes, and the judgments which I command you today, to observe them.

a. He repays those who hate Him to their

face: Over many generations the Canaanites had demonstrated their hatred for God, Now, using Israel as His instrument, God will repay them with judgment.

B. Blessing on an obedient Israel.

1. (12-16) Abundant blessings for obedience.

Then it shall come to pass, because you listen to these judgments, and keep and do them, that the LORD your God will keep with you the

covenant and the mercy which He swore to your fathers. And He will love you and bless you and multiply you; He will also bless the fruit of your womb and the fruit of your land, your grain and your new wine and your oil, the increase of your cattle and the offspring of your flock, in the land of which He swore to your fathers to give you.

You shall be blessed above all peoples; there shall not be a male or female barren among you or among your livestock. And the LORD will take away from you all sickness, and will afflict you with none of the terrible diseases of Egypt which you have known, but will lay *them* on all those who hate you. And you shall destroy all the peoples whom the LORD your God delivers over to you; your eye shall have no pity on them; nor shall you serve their gods, for that *will be* a snare to you.

2. (17-24) Have confidence in God's strength.

If you should say in your heart, "These nations are greater than I; how can I dispossess them?"; you shall not be afraid of them, *but* you shall remember well what the LORD your God did to Pharaoh and to all Egypt: the great trials which your eyes saw, the signs and the wonders, the mighty hand and the outstretched arm, by which the LORD your God brought you out. So shall the LORD your God do to all the peoples of whom you are afraid. Moreover the LORD your

God will send the hornet among them until those who are left, who hide themselves from you, are destroyed. You shall not be terrified of them; for the LORD your God, the great and awesome God, *is* among you. And the LORD your God will drive out those nations before you little by little; you will be unable to destroy them at once, lest the beasts of the field become *too* numerous for you. But the LORD your God will deliver them over to you, and will inflict defeat upon them until they are destroyed. And He will deliver their kings into your hand, and you will destroy their name from under heaven; no one shall be able to stand against you until you have destroyed them.

a. **You shall not be afraid of them, but you shall remember well what the LORD your God did:** Their recollection of God's faithfulness in the past would give them hope for their current struggle.

b. **You will be unable to destroy them at once:** God would go before Israel and fight for them (**the great and awesome God, is among you**) but He would not drive all the enemies out at once. Perhaps Israel wanted the land all cleared out before them, but God knew it was not best for the land or for them.

c. **Lest the beast of the field become too numerous for you:** The way easiest for Israel was for God to clear all Israel's enemies out at once. But this easy way had consequences Israel could not see or appreciate.

d. **Little by little:** Sometimes to our frustration, this is the way God often works in our life. He clears things away little by little even though we might prefer it all at once. But God wanted Israel to grow spiritually in the process of taking the Promised Land.

i. Doing it all at once might seem easier and better to us, but will have consequences we cannot see or appreciate. God cares that we grow, and so He grows us **little by little**.

3. (25-26) Do not share in their abominations.

You shall burn the carved images of their gods with fire; you shall not covet the silver or gold *that is* on them, nor take *it* for yourselves, lest you be snared by it; for it *is* an abomination to the LORD your God. Nor shall you bring an abomination into your house, lest you be doomed to destruction like it. You shall utterly detest it and utterly abhor it, for it *is* an accursed thing.

© 2006 David Guzik - *No distribution beyond personal use without permission* **2** and he delivers them over to you and you attack them, you must utterly annihilate them. Make no treaty with them and show them no mercy! **3** You must not intermarry with them. Do not give your daughters to their sons or take their daughters for your sons, **4** for they will turn your sons away from me to worship other gods. Then the anger of the LORD will erupt against you and he will quickly destroy you. **5** Instead, this is what you must do to them: You must tear down their altars, shatter their sacred pillars, cut down their sacred Asherah poles, and burn up their idols. **6** For you are a people holy to the LORD your God. He has chosen you to be his people, prized above all others on the face of the earth.

7 It is not because you were more numerous than all the other peoples that the LORD favored and chose you – for in fact you were the least numerous of all peoples. **8**

Rather it is because of his love for you and his faithfulness to the promise he solemnly vowed to your ancestors that the LORD brought you out with great power, redeeming you from the place of slavery, from the power of Pharaoh king of Egypt. **9** So realize that the LORD your God is the true God, the faithful God who keeps covenant faithfully with those who love him and keep his commandments, to a thousand generations, **10** but who pays back those who hate him as they deserve and destroys them. He will not ignore those who hate him but will repay them as they deserve! **11** So keep the commandments, statutes, and ordinances that I today am commanding you to do.

12 If you obey these ordinances and are careful to do them, the LORD your God will faithfully keep covenant with you as he promised your ancestors. **13** He will love and bless you, and make you numerous. He will bless you with many children, with the produce of your soil, your grain, your new wine, your oil, the offspring of your oxen, and the young of your flocks in the land which he promised your ancestors to give you. **14** You will be blessed beyond all peoples; there will be no barrenness among you or your livestock. **15** The LORD will protect you from all sickness, and you will not experience any of the terrible diseases that you knew in Egypt; instead he will inflict them on all those who hate you. **16** You must destroy all the people whom the LORD your God is about to deliver over to you; you must not pity them or worship their gods, for that will be a snare to you. **17** If you think, "These nations are more numerous than I – how can I dispossess them?" **18** you must not fear them. You must carefully recall what the LORD your God did to Pharaoh and all Egypt, **19** the great judgments you saw, the signs and wonders, the strength and power by which he brought you out – thus the LORD your God will do to all the people you fear. **20** Furthermore, the LORD your God will release hornets among them until the very last ones who hide from you perish. **21** You must not tremble in their presence, for the LORD your God, who is present among you, is a great and awesome God. **22** He, the God who leads you, will expel the nations little by little. You will not be allowed to destroy them all at once lest the wild animals overrun you. **23** The LORD your God will give them over to you; he will throw them into a great panic until they are destroyed. **24** He will hand over their kings to you and you will erase their very names from memory. Nobody will be able to resist you until you destroy them. **25** You must burn the images of their gods, but do not covet the silver and gold that covers them so much that you take it for yourself and thus become ensnared by it; for it is

abhorrent to the LORD your God. **26** You must not bring any abhorrent thing into your house and thereby become an object of divine wrath along with it. You must absolutely detest and abhor it, for it is an object of divine wrath.

1 You must keep carefully all these commandments I am giving you today so that you may live, increase in number, and go in and occupy the land that the LORD promised to your ancestors.

Guzik - Deuteronomy 8:1-20

Deuteronomy 8 - A Warning Against Pride

A. God's work of building humility in Israel during the wilderness wanderings.

1. (1-2) God humbled and tested Israel.

Every commandment which I command you today you must be careful to observe, that you may live and multiply, and go in and possess the land of which the LORD swore to your fathers.

And you shall remember that the LORD your God led you all the way these forty years in the wilderness, to humble you *and* test you, to know what *was* in your heart, whether you would keep His commandments or not.

a. **Every command . . . you must be careful**

to observe: God called Israel to a complete obedience. This obedience was to be based on remembering what the LORD had done among them in the wilderness.

b. **To humble you:** God *humbled* Israel. He brought them to a place where all they could do was depend on Him. They had nothing else, and no one else to count on.

i. Some think that God's work of humbling is accomplished just by bringing us into a humble place. But it is where our heart is while we are in the humble place that God is really concerned about. We may be in a humble place, but longing for something

different. We may believe that God owes something different to us, and we will soon get it. Instead, God wants us to be content in the humble place He puts us.

c. **And test you:** God *tested* Israel. It was not because He didn't know their hearts, but because *they* didn't know their hearts. We have to constantly be corrected of our over-estimation of ourselves.

2. (3-5) God's education of Israel in the wilderness.

So He humbled you, allowed you to hunger, and fed you with manna which you did not know nor did your fathers know, that He might make you know that man shall not live by bread alone; but man lives by every *word* that proceeds from the mouth of the LORD. Your garments did not wear out on you, nor did your foot swell these forty years. You should know in your heart that as a man chastens his son, so the LORD your God chastens you.

a. **So He humbled you:** All of God's education begins here. Some never even make it past this first essential step. If we are not humble and not teachable, there is then no point to the rest of any of God's education.

b. **Allowed you to hunger, and fed you**

manna: The next grade of God's education is *total dependence* on the LORD. Israel had to rely on God beyond their own knowledge (**which you did not know**), and beyond their own ability.

c. **That He might make you know that man**

shall not live by bread alone: In the

negative, this was the lesson God wanted them

to learn. In the positive, they had to learn that **man lives by every word that proceeds from the mouth of the LORD**. Sadly, many still live by **bread alone**, living only for material things, for what can be bought or sold or earned or possessed materially.

- i. This statement is a command; but it is also a simple statement of fact: **man shall not *live* by bread alone** . You may exist by material things alone, but you will not *live*. Anyone thinking they live for bread alone is actually one of the living dead.
- ii. Some don't **live** by God's word because they *fight* with God's word: "The worst impliment with which you can knock a man down, is the Bible; it is intended for us to live upon, - not to be the weapon of our controversies, but our daily food, upon which we rejoice to live." (Spurgeon)
- iii. We live by every **word** that proceeds from the mouth of God, not by every feeling we experience. "You have never received spiritual life by your own feelings. It was when you believed God's Word that you lived; and you will never get an increase of spiritual life, and grow in grace, by your own feelings or your own doings. It must still be by your believing the promises and feeding on the Word." (Spurgeon)
- iv. It is the word of God that is our food and substance, and not our own dreams or imaginations. If you are more excited about some dream or vision than you are about God's word, then something is wrong. *The prophet who has a dream, let him tell a dream; And he who has My word, let him speak My word faithfully. What is the chaff to the wheat?" says the LORD.* (Jer. 23:28) v. We live by **every** word: "In places where they cut diamonds, they sweep up the dust, because the very dust of diamonds is valuable; and in the Word of God, all the truth is so precious that the very tiniest truth, if there be such a thing, is still diamond dust, and is unspeakably precious."

(Spurgeon)

vi. Find life in every word that proceeds from the mouth of the LORD! "Oh, keep to the Word, my brothers! Keep to it as God's

Word, and as coming out of his mouth. Suck

it down into your soul; you cannot have too

much of it. Feed on it day and night, for thus will God make you to live the life that is life indeed." (Spurgeon) 3. (6-10)

Blessings in the land for Israel.

Therefore you shall keep the commandments of

the LORD your God, to walk in His ways and to

fear Him. For the LORD your God is bringing you into a good land, a land of brooks of water, of fountains and springs, that flow out of valleys and hills; a land of wheat and barley, of vines and fig trees and pomegranates, a land of olive oil and honey; a land in which you will eat bread without scarcity, in which you will lack nothing; a land whose stones *are* iron and out of whose hills you can dig copper. When you have eaten and are full, then you shall bless the LORD your God for the good land which He has given you.

a. Therefore you shall keep the

commandments of the LORD your God: If

Israel would put their focus on *every word that proceeds from the mouth of the LORD*, then the LORD would take care of all the material things - and bring them into a materially abundant land.

i. God is not against material things - except when they come between us and Him. God wanted to materially bless a spiritually

obedient Israel.

ii. "The reference to *iron* and *copper* in the hills is remarkably exact. Ancient copper mines and smelters have been discovered in

recent years in the Arabah below the Dead

Sea, and geological survey has

demonstrated the presence of ores of

copper and iron in the nearby hills." (Thompson)

b. Then you shall bless the LORD your God

for the good land which He has given you: This is the simple principle of Mat. 6:33 - *But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you.*

B. A warning against pride.

1. (11-17) The danger of pride in the blessed life.

Beware that you do not forget the LORD your God by not keeping His commandments, His judgments, and His statutes which I command you today, lest; *when* you have eaten and are full, and have built beautiful houses and dwell *in them*; and *when* your herds and your flocks multiply, and your silver and your gold are multiplied, and all that you have is multiplied; when your heart is lifted up, and you forget the LORD your God who brought you out of the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage; who led you through that great and terrible wilderness, *in which were* fiery serpents and scorpions and thirsty land where there was no water; who brought water for you out of the flinty rock; who fed you in the wilderness with manna, which your fathers did not know, that He might humble you and that He might test you, to do you good in the end; then you say in your heart, "My power and the might of my hand have gained me this wealth."

a. Beware that you do not forget the LORD your God by not keeping His

commandments: When everything this fine and our lives are filled with abundance, it is not hard to have our hearts lifted up. We can easily forget the LORD Himself and forget it was all His work on our behalf.

b. My power and the might of my hand

have gained me this wealth: This is rarely said with the *lips*; it is said instead in the *heart*.

It is easier to say "God did it" or "It's all the blessing of the LORD" than it is to really *mean* these words in the heart.

2. (18) The correcting principle against pride in the blessed life.

And you shall remember the LORD your God, for *it is* He who gives you power to get wealth, that He may establish His covenant which He swore to your fathers, as *it is* this day.

a. **Remember the LORD your God:** In times of abundance, it is easy to forget the LORD, or to at least no longer seek Him with the urgency we once had.

b. **It is He who gives you power to get wealth:** We often thinking highly of our own hard work and brilliance. Yet we must see that God gives us the body, the brain, and the talent. It is all of God.

c. **That He may establish His covenant:**

This reminds us *why* God has blessed us. His plan is that it would ultimately further *His* eternal purpose. Therefore we have no right to use our material blessing to further selfish purposes; instead, we use our resources to advance His kingdom.

3. (19-20) The penalty of pride in the blessed life.

Then it shall be, if you by any means forget the LORD your God, and follow other gods, and serve them and worship them, I testify against you this day that you shall surely perish. As the nations which the LORD destroys before you, so you shall perish, because you would not be obedient to the voice of the LORD your God.

a. **I testify against you this day that you**

shall surely perish: Moses loved Israel, but he loved God more. Without hesitation, he would take the witness stand against a disobedient, proud Israel - and warn them before God that they will **surely perish** because of their pride and disobedience.

b. **As the nations which the LORD destroys**

before you, so shall you perish: Israel would be tempted to look at the nations being judged in front of them, and to think, "We're better than them, so we are safe. God would never deal with us that way." But God would deal with them that way if they rose up in pride against Him.

c. **So you shall perish:** Pride is the greatest danger in the Christian life. It is the most Satanic of sins, because it was by pride that

Satan himself fell. Satan prizes a proud believer over the most notorious sinner, because he looks at the proud believer and says, "Now *there's* a man just like me!"

i. Pride of *face* is obnoxious; pride of *race* is vulgar; but the worst pride is the pride of *grace*.

© 2006 David Guzik - *No distribution beyond personal use without permission* **2** Remember the whole way by which he has brought you these forty years through the desert so that he might, by humbling you, test you to see if you have it within you to keep his commandments or not. **3** So he humbled you by making you hungry and then feeding you with unfamiliar manna. He did this to teach you that humankind cannot live by bread alone, but also by everything that comes from the LORD's mouth. **4** Your clothing did not wear out nor did your feet swell all these forty years. **5** Be keenly aware that just as a parent disciplines his child, the LORD your God disciplines you. **6** So you must keep his commandments, live according to his standards, and revere him. **7** For the LORD your God is bringing you to a good land, a land of brooks, springs, and fountains flowing forth in valleys and hills, **8** a land of wheat, barley, vines, fig trees, and pomegranates, of olive trees and honey, **9** a land where you may eat food in plenty and find no lack of anything, a land whose stones are iron and from whose hills you can mine copper. **10** You will eat your fill and then praise the LORD your God because of the good land he has given you.

11 Be sure you do not forget the LORD your God by not keeping his commandments, ordinances, and statutes that I am giving you today. **12** When you eat your fill, when you build and occupy good houses, **13** when your cattle and flocks increase, when you have plenty of silver and gold, and when you have abundance of everything, **14** be sure you do not feel self-important and forget the LORD

your God who brought you from the land of Egypt, the place of slavery, **15** and who brought you through the great, fearful desert of venomous serpents and scorpions, an arid place with no water. He made water flow from a flint rock and **16** fed you in the desert with manna (which your ancestors had never before known) so that he might by humbling you test you and eventually bring good to you. **17** Be careful not to say, "My own ability and skill have gotten me this wealth." **18** You must remember the LORD your God, for he is the one who gives ability to get wealth; if you do this he will confirm his covenant that he made by oath to your ancestors, even as he has to this day. **19** Now if you forget the LORD your God at all and follow other gods, worshiping and prostrating yourselves before them, I testify to you today that you will surely be annihilated. **20** Just like the nations the LORD is about to destroy from your sight, so he will do to you because you would not obey him.

1 Listen, Israel: Today you are about to cross the Jordan so you can dispossess the nations there, people greater and stronger than you who live in large cities with extremely high fortifications.

Guzik - Deuteronomy 9:1-29

Deuteronomy 9 - The Battles Ahead and the

Failures Behind

A. Considering the battles ahead.

1. (1-2) The difficulty of the battles ahead.

Hear, O Israel: You *are* to cross over the Jordan today, and go in to dispossess nations greater and mightier than yourself, cities great and fortified up to heaven, a people great and tall, the descendants of the Anakim, whom you know, and *of whom* you heard *it said*, "Who can stand before the descendants of Anak?"

a. **Go in to dispossess nations greater and**

mightier than yourself: God was leading Israel into something too big for them. It was a challenge they could only meet if they trusted in God.

b. **Cities great and fortified up to heaven:** The cities they would battle against were mighty and the people they would battle against were **great and tall**. Yet God had called them to enter into this seemingly impossible battle.

i. There was no way Israel could do this in the flesh, or on their strength. God

commanded them to do something that was just beyond their ability to do in themselves.

ii. Obviously, God did not inspire Israel with a false sense of confidence or hype. He wanted them to realistically know what the battle ahead would be like.

iii. In the same way, Jesus never calls us with hype or false promises that would lead to false confidence. He plainly says, *If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me.* (Mat. 16:24)

Jesus let us know right from the beginning that following Him would require giving God everything.

2. (3) Why victory is possible with the difficult battles ahead. Therefore understand today that the LORD your God *is* He who goes over before you *as* a consuming fire. He will destroy them and bring them down before you; so you shall drive them out and destroy them quickly, as the LORD has said to you.

a. **Understand today:** Just as much as Israel had to understand the impossibility of the battle on their own, they also must understand the *certainty* of victory in the LORD.

b. **The LORD your God is He who goes before you as a consuming fire. He will destroy them:** It was a battle too big for Israel, but not too big for the LORD. Israel could know both facts: That in themselves, the job was impossible (*without Me you can do nothing*, Joh. 15:5), but in God the battle could *not* be lost (*I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me*, Philippians 4:13).

c. **He will destroy them:** God was also calling Israel to a *partnership* in winning the battles.

He will destroy them does not contradict **you shall quickly drive them out and destroy them quickly**. Was God going to do it, or was Israel going to do it? Both, really - God was calling Israel to *workers together with Him* (2Co. 6:1).

d. **Destroy them quickly:** God did not want the Israelites to show mercy to the Canaanites.

He wanted Israel to be a unique army of judgment against the Canaanites and their culture, which was so depraved that it deserved this kind of judgment.

i. Archaeologist William F. Albright, in his book *From the Stone Age to Christianity*, describes what the primary focus of Canaanite religion was: sex. The featured idols recovered by archaeologists are hundreds of nude female forms in sexually

suggestive forms, as well as male idols associated with homosexual cults (*From the Stone Age to Christianity*, pages 232-235).

ii. "Thus the Canaanites, with their orgiastic nature-worship, their cult of fertility in the form of serpent symbols and sensuous nudity, and their gross mythology, were replaced by Israel." (Albright, page 281).

3. (4-6) The danger of pride when the LORD gives them victory.

Do not think in your heart, after the LORD your God has cast them out before you, saying, "Because of my righteousness the LORD has brought me in to possess this land"; but *it is* because of the wickedness of these nations *that* the LORD is driving them out from before you. *It is* not because of your righteousness or the uprightness of your heart *that* you go in to possess their land, but because of the wickedness of these nations *that* the LORD your God drives them out from before you, and that He may fulfill the word which the LORD swore to your fathers, to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Therefore understand that the LORD your God is not giving you this good land to possess because of your righteousness, for you *are* a stiff-necked people.

a. **Do not think in your heart:** Israel's temptation to pride did not come in something they would actually say. Long before we will say proud words we think proud thoughts in our heart. Therefore Israel must not think in their heart that it was because of their **righteousness** that the LORD has given them the land.

i. This is a preview of salvation by grace through faith, in which we cannot think that it is our righteousness that has obtained it. Instead, it is the righteousness we have received in Jesus Christ.

ii. When we receive any gift from God, we are tempted to take it and use it to glorify ourselves. Israel must not do this in regard

to the gift of the Promised Land, and we must not do it in regard to any gift the LORD would give us.

iii. Sayings or proverbs of the ancient world reflect man's desire to *earn* his own righteousness and justification before God.

"I will not have heaven for nothing" said one, and another said "Give me heaven, for Thou owe it to me." The same idea is expressed in an old Roman Catholic teaching that dying men should pray, "LORD, join my righteousness with Christ's righteousness" as if the two together could accomplish something. Instead, we look to the righteousness of Jesus alone.

b. **For you are a stiff-necked people:** The idea is that Israel, like a rebellious domestic animal, would stiffen its neck against the yoke God would put upon it. They would not submit to God's direction in their life.

i. **Stiff-necked** "is a figurative expression for stubborn, intractable, obdurate, and hardheaded." (Kalland)

B. The stiff-necked character of Israel is demonstrated in their past failures.

1. (7) A call to remember their past rebellions.

Remember! Do not forget how you provoked the LORD your God to wrath in the wilderness. From the day that you departed from the land of Egypt until you came to this place, you have been rebellious against the LORD.

a. **Remember and do not forget:** God's purpose in reminding Israel of their rebellions against Him was not to discourage them or to make them feel defeated. The purpose was so that they would recognize their own weakness and trust in Him.

b. **You have been rebellious against the LORD:** The same idea is communicated in the New Testament at 1Co. 10:12: *T herefore let him who things he stands take heed lest he fall.*

When we remember our sinful nature, we walk in the poverty of spirit Jesus said was essential to a life of blessing (Mat. 5:3).

2. (8-21) Remembering the rebellion at Mount Horeb.

Also in Horeb you provoked the LORD to wrath, so that the LORD was angry *enough* with you to have destroyed you. When I went up into the mountain to receive the tablets of stone, the tablets of the covenant which the LORD made with you, then I stayed on the mountain forty days and forty nights. I neither ate bread nor drank water. Then the LORD delivered to me two tablets of stone written with the finger of God, and on them *were* all the words which the LORD had spoken to you on the mountain from the midst of the fire in the day of the assembly. And it came to pass, at the end of forty days and forty nights, *that* the LORD gave me the two tablets of stone, the tablets of the covenant. Then the LORD said to me, "Arise, go down quickly from here, for your people whom you brought out of Egypt have acted corruptly; they have quickly turned aside from the way which I commanded them; they have made themselves a molded image." Furthermore the LORD spoke to me, saying, "I have seen this people, and indeed they are a stiff-necked people. Let Me alone, that I may destroy them and blot out their name from under heaven; and I will make of you a nation mightier and greater than they." So I turned and came down from the mountain, and the mountain burned with fire; and the two tablets of the covenant *were* in my two hands. And I looked, and behold, you had sinned against the LORD your God; had made for yourselves a molded calf! You had turned aside quickly from the way which the LORD had commanded you. Then I took the two tablets and

threw them out of my two hands and broke them before your eyes. And I fell down before the LORD, as at the first, forty days and forty nights; I neither ate bread nor drank water, because of all your sin which you committed in doing wickedly in the sight of the LORD, to provoke Him to anger. For I was afraid of the anger and hot displeasure with which the LORD was angry with you, to destroy you. But the LORD listened to me at that time also. And the LORD was very angry with Aaron *and* would have destroyed him; so I prayed for Aaron also at the same time. Then I took your sin, the calf which you had made, and burned it with fire and crushed it *and* ground *it* very small, until it was as fine as dust; and I threw its dust into the brook that descended from the mountain.

a. **Also in Horeb you provoked the LORD to**

wrath: This recalls the events at Mount Sinai, where Israel worshipped a golden calf when Moses was gone a long time on Mount Sinai, receiving the law from the LORD (Exodus 19-32).

b. **Written with the finger of God:** The original tablets of the law Moses received on Mount Sinai were actually written by God Himself, and contained the Ten Commandments (**all the words which the LORD had spoken to you on the mount from the midst of the fire in the day of the assembly**, found in Exodus 20).

c. **I will make of you a nation mightier and greater than they:** God told Moses of His desire to wipe out Israel in judgment, and to start over again with a new nation, descended from Moses himself.

d. **The mountain burned with fire:** The burning fires on Mount Sinai were physical representations of the glory of God and His holy presence. The mountain began to burn when Israel first came to Mount

Sinai (Exo. 19:18).

Those fires had burned for 40 straight days, and they burned *at the very time* Israel made a golden calf and began to worship it.

e. I took the two tablets and threw them out of my two hands and broke them

before your eyes: Moses broke the tablets,

"Not by an unbridled passion, but in zeal for God's honour, and by direction of God's Spirit, to signify to the people, that the covenant between God and them contained in those tables was broken and made void, and they were now quite cast out of God's favor, and could expect nothing from him but fiery indignation and severe justice." (Poole)

f. For I was afraid: The Hebrew word here is a rare word, translated in the Septuagint by the strong word *ekphobos*, which means "exceedingly frightened" or "stricken with terror." When he saw the sin of Israel and knew the holiness of God, Moses was *very* afraid for the sake of the people of Israel.

g. I prayed for Aaron also: Aaron's sin, detailed in Exodus 32, was so bad, that he surely would have been destroyed by the LORD

- except Moses prayed for him. This shows both the prevailing power of Moses' prayer and the great love in the heart of Moses.

h. Burned it with fire and crushed it and

ground it very small: Moses burnt the idol, ground it up, and sprinkled it in the people's drinking water for three reasons.

- To show this god was nothing and could be destroyed easily
- To completely obliterate this idol
- To make the people pay an immediate consequence of their sin

3. (22-24) Parenthesis: remembering the rebellions at Taberah, Massah, Kibroth Hattaavah, and Kadesh Barnea.

Also at Taberah and Massah and Kibroth

Hattaavah you provoked the LORD to wrath.

Likewise, when the LORD sent you from Kadesh

Barnea, saying, "Go up and possess the land which I have given you," then you rebelled against the commandment of the LORD your God, and you did not believe Him nor obey His

voice. You have been rebellious against the LORD

from the day that I knew you.

a. **Also at Taberah:** The name **Taberah** means "burning," and in Numbers 11, when the people of Israel first left Mount Sinai to head towards Kadesh Barnea and the Promised Land, they immediately complained and God sent fires of judgment against them at a place they called **Taberah** because of the burning fires of God's judgment.

b. **And Massah:** Exo. 17:7 describes the naming of a place called **Massah**, which means "tempted," because there Israel provoked the LORD by doubting His loving care and concern for them in the wilderness.

c. **Kibroth Hattaavah:** The name means "graves of craving" and was the place where Israel longed for meat instead of manna, and God gave them meat. However, it became plagued in the mouths of those with greedy and discontent hearts (described in Numbers 11).

d. **When the LORD sent you from Kadesh**

Barnea: Moses briefly remembered the rebellion at **Kadesh Barnea**, where Israel doubted God's love for them and refused to enter the Promised Land by faith - rebelling

against the LORD (Numbers 13-14).

e. **You did not believe Him nor obey His**

voice: Israel's disobedience to God began with their unbelief. They did not believe God loved them and was mighty enough to bring them into the Promised Land.

4. (25-29) Moses' prayer of intercession for Israel when they rebelled at Mount Horeb.

Thus I prostrated myself before the LORD; forty days and forty nights I kept prostrating myself, because the LORD had said He would destroy you. Therefore I prayed to the LORD, and said:

"O Lord GOD, do not destroy Your people and Your inheritance whom You have redeemed through Your greatness, whom You have brought out of Egypt with a mighty hand. Remember Your servants, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; do not look on the stubbornness of this people, or on their wickedness or their sin, lest the land from which You brought us should say, 'Because the LORD

was not able to bring them to the land which He promised them, and because He hated them, He has brought them out to kill them in the

wilderness.' Yet they *are* Your people and Your inheritance, whom You brought out by Your mighty power and by Your outstretched arm."

a. **Therefore I prayed to the LORD:** This great prayer of intercession from Moses is described more fully in Exodus 32. Moses asked for mercy upon Israel because of God's past faithfulness to them (**whom You have redeemed**).

b. **Remember Your servants Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob:** Moses asked for mercy upon Israel because of God's past faithfulness to the patriarchs.

c. **Lest the land from which You brought us should say, "Because the LORD was not able"** : Moses asked for mercy upon Israel because of concern for the glory of God's own name and His reputation among the nations.

d. Your people . . . Your inheritance . . .

You brought out . . . Your mighty

power . . . Your outstretched arm: Moses asked for mercy upon Israel because they were God's people.

i. We can seek the mercy and power of God through prayer by praying with the same heart and by pleading the same reasons before the LORD. Prayer on solid reasons like these is far more effective than merely casting wishes up towards heaven.

- Because of God's past faithfulness to us
- Because of His past faithfulness to our forefathers

- Because of His own glory and reputation among the nations

- Because we are His people

ii. Keeping these things in mind is also a way to refine our prayers. When we pray only for the things consistent with God's glory, we

have our hearts set on the right things.

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without permission **2** They include the Anakites, a numerous and tall people whom you know about and of whom it is said, "Who is able to resist the Anakites?" **3** Understand

today that the LORD your God who goes before you is a devouring fire; he will defeat and subdue them before you.

You will dispossess and destroy them quickly just as he has told you. **4** Do not think to yourself after the LORD your God

has driven them out before you, "Because of my own righteousness the LORD has brought me here to possess this

land." It is because of the wickedness of these nations that the Lord is driving them out ahead of you. **5** It is not

because of your righteousness, or even your inner uprightness, that you have come here to possess their land.

Instead, because of the wickedness of these nations the LORD your God is driving them out ahead of you in order to

confirm the promise he made on oath to your ancestors, to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. **6** Understand, therefore, that it is not because of your righteousness that the LORD your God is about to give you this good land as a possession, for you are a stubborn people!

7 Remember – don't ever forget – how you provoked the LORD your God in the desert; from the time you left the land of Egypt until you came to this place you were constantly rebelling against him. **8** At Horeb you provoked him and he was angry enough with you to destroy you. **9**

When I went up the mountain to receive the stone tablets, the tablets of the covenant that the LORD made with you, I remained there forty days and nights, eating and drinking nothing. **10** The LORD gave me the two stone tablets, written by the very finger of God, and on them was everything he said to you at the mountain from the midst of the fire at the time of that assembly. **11** Now at the end of the forty days and nights the LORD presented me with the two stone tablets, the tablets of the covenant.

12 And he said to me, "Get up, go down at once from here because your people whom you brought out of Egypt have sinned! They have quickly turned from the way I commanded them and have made for themselves a cast metal image." **13** Moreover, he said to me, "I have taken note of these people; they are a stubborn lot! **14** Stand aside and I will destroy them, obliterating their very name from memory, and I will make you into a stronger and more numerous nation than they are."

15 So I turned and went down the mountain while it was blazing with fire; the two tablets of the covenant were in my hands. **16** When I looked, you had indeed sinned against the LORD your God and had cast for yourselves a metal calf; you had quickly turned aside from the way he had commanded you! **17** I grabbed the two tablets, threw them down, and shattered them before your very eyes. **18**

Then I again fell down before the LORD for forty days and nights; I ate and drank nothing because of all the sin you had committed, doing such evil before the LORD as to enrage him. **19** For I was terrified at the LORD's intense anger that threatened to destroy you. But he listened to me this time as well. **20** The LORD was also angry enough at Aaron to kill him, but at that time I prayed for him too.

21 As for your sinful thing that you had made, the calf, I took it, melted it down, ground it up until it was as fine as dust, and tossed the dust into the stream that flows down the mountain. **22** Moreover, you continued to provoke the LORD at Taberah, Massah, and Kibroth-Hattaavah. **23** And when he sent you from Kadesh-Barnea and told you, "Go up and possess the land I have given you," you rebelled against the LORD your God and would neither believe nor obey him. **24** You have been rebelling against him from the very first day I knew you!

25 I lay flat on the ground before the LORD for forty days and nights, for he had said he would destroy you. **26**

I prayed to him: O, Lord GOD, do not destroy your people, your valued property that you have powerfully redeemed, whom you brought out of Egypt by your strength. **27**

Remember your servants Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; ignore the stubbornness, wickedness, and sin of these people. **28** Otherwise the people of the land from which you brought us will say, "The LORD was unable to bring them to the land he promised them, and because of his hatred for them he has brought them out to kill them in the desert." **29** They are your people, your valued property, whom you brought out with great strength and power.

1 At that same time the LORD said to me, "Carve out for yourself two stone tablets like the first ones and come up the mountain to me; also make for yourself a wooden ark.

Guzik - Deuteronomy 10:1-22

Deuteronomy 10 - Recovering after a Fall

A. God's plan of recovery for Israel after the rebellion at Mount Sinai.

1. (1-5) Israel had to get back to the Word of God, so God commanded the giving of the new tablets of the law.

At that time the LORD said to me, "Hew for yourself two tablets of stone like the first, and come up to Me on the mountain and make yourself an ark of wood. And I will write on the tablets the words that were on the first tablets, which you broke; and you shall put them in the ark." So I made an ark of acacia wood, hewed two tablets of stone like the first, and went up the mountain, having the two tablets in my hand.

And He wrote on the tablets according to the first writing, the Ten Commandments, which the LORD had spoken to you in the mountain from

the midst of the fire in the day of the assembly; and the LORD gave them to me. Then I turned and came down from the mountain, and put the tablets in the ark which I had made; and there they are, just as the LORD commanded me.

a. Hew for yourself two tablets of stone

like the first: Moses broke the tablets of the law, not only out of anger, but also as a powerful visual representation of Israel's

breaking of the law of God. Now God commanded that the law be restored by bringing forth two new tablets of the law.

b. He wrote on the tablets according to

the first writing: God wanted His written word to be the starting point for Israel's right walk with Him. Therefore He restored the tablets, even writing on the second tablets with His own hand.

i. This is a powerful picture of the inspiration of God's word; though God did not literally write the Scriptures with His own hand, He

did perfectly guide the minds and hands of

the writers, so that the Scriptures are "God-breathed" (2Ti. 3:16), that is, given by the inspiration of God.

c. And put the tablets in the ark which I

had made; and there they are: Getting right with God after a time of rebellion must *always* begin and center on God's word. In the days of Josiah, King of Judah, repentance and revival came to the people of God when they focused on God's word again (2Ki. 22:8-23:25).

2. (6-9) In order to deal with Israel's sin problem, God established an enduring priesthood.

(Now the children of Israel journeyed from the wells of Bene Jaakan to Moserah, where Aaron died, and where he was buried; and Eleazar his son ministered as priest in his stead. From there they journeyed to Gudgodah, and from Gudgodah to Jotbathah, a land of rivers of water.

At that time the LORD separated the tribe of Levi to bear the ark of the covenant of the LORD, to stand before the LORD to minister to Him and to bless in His name, to this day. Therefore Levi has no portion nor inheritance with his brethren; the LORD *is* his inheritance, just as the LORD your God promised him.) a. **Where Aaron died, and where he was**

buried; and Eleazar his son ministered as

priest in his stead: This parenthesis speaking about the priesthood demonstrated the need for priestly sacrifice and intercession in getting right with God after a time of rebellion. Israel needed the sacrifice, intercession, and blessing that the Levites would bring to the nation.

i. The need for a priesthood shouted to

Israel: "You can't do it on your own. You need to come to God through a mediator, who will atone for your sin, pray for you, and bless you. If you refuse your priestly mediator, and trust in your own ability to do these things, you will perish."

b. **To stand before the LORD to minister to**

Him and to bless in His name: Getting right with God after a time of rebellion must *always* have a focus on the priestly ministry of Jesus on our behalf. This work of Jesus is shown in His atonement for our sin at the cross, on His intercession for us in heaven, and on the blessing that He brings to us from heaven.

3. (10-11) Israel need to move on towards the Promised Land, so God gave Moses the command to go forth.

As at the first time, I stayed in the mountain forty days and forty nights; the LORD also heard me at that time, *and* the LORD chose not to destroy you. Then the LORD said to me, "Arise, begin *your* journey before the people, that they may go in and possess the land which I swore to their fathers to give them."

a. **Arise, begin your journey:** Israel's rebellion at Mount Sinai with the golden calf was significant; it was no small matter. Yet God was not done with them. After they came back to His word and came through His priesthood, it was time to move on. God had a place to take them and they had to get about the business of getting there.

b. **That they may go in and possess the land:** Getting right with God after a time of rebellion must *always* come to a place of progress again. It does no good to come back to the word, come through God's priesthood in Jesus, and then remain stuck in the same place.

God wants us to move on with Him, and when we are walking right with God again, we will **go in and possess the land**.

B. What God requires of Israel.

1. (12-13) What the LORD requires of His people.

And now, Israel, what does the LORD your God require of you, but to fear the LORD your God, to walk in all His ways and to love Him, to serve the LORD your God with

all your heart and with all your soul, *and* to keep the commandments of the LORD and His statutes which I command you today for your good?

a. **Fear the LORD your God:** God requires from us a reverential honor towards Him; not a fear that would make us shrink back, but a heart that so honors God that we would be

hesitant to offend Him.

b. **To walk in all His ways:** God requires us to live our lives after the pattern He has set for us; to walk on His road not on our own.

c. **To love Him:** God requires us to love Him.

This means the love He expects isn't a love that just happens, but it is a love that comes from a decision to set our affection upon Him.

d. **To serve the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul:** God

requires us to serve Him, to see all that we do as service unto Him, and to do all that we do as if doing it unto Him.

e. **To keep the commandments of the**

LORD and His statutes: God requires us to not only know His word, but to *keep* it - in the sense of possessing it in ourselves, and in the sense of protecting it.

f. **For your good:** every command of God is given for our good. They are never given so He can exercise His power, or so He can feel important. Every command He makes is with our best interest in mind, even if we cannot sense it or understand it.

2. (14-15) Why God requires this from Israel.

Indeed heaven and the highest heavens belong

to the LORD your God, *also* the earth with all that *is* in it.

The LORD delighted only in your fathers, to love them; and He chose their descendants after them, you above all peoples, as *it is* this day.

a. **The LORD delighted only in your**

fathers, to love them: God requires this conduct from His people because they are His special possession. Though heaven and earth

belong to God, He set His focus and attention on Israel beginning with their fathers.

b. You above all peoples, as it is this day: Being chosen - having the special attention of God focused upon you - is a place of great privilege, but also a place of great responsibility.

Israel had a special responsibility to obedience.

3. (16) What it takes to fulfill what God requires.

Therefore circumcise the foreskin of your heart, and be stiff-necked no longer.

a. Therefore circumcise the foreskin of

your heart: All males among Israel had to be circumcised eight days after they were born. But this minor surgery was merely a symbol for the real work of cutting away the flesh God that desired; the work of taking our hearts inclined after the flesh and giving us hearts inclined after the spirit.

b. And be stiff-necked no longer: This theme would be repeated later in the prophets.

Circumcise yourselves to the LORD, and take away the foreskins of your hearts (Jer. 4:4). To fulfill God's law, it takes more than being given a command - it takes an inner transformation, a transformation that only God can bring.

i. God command them to do something that only He could do in them to show them the need to have the inner transformation, and to compel them to seek Him for this inner work.

ii. Israel is said to have uncircumcised hearts in Lev. 26:41, Jer. 9:26, and Eze. 44:7 and 9.

4. (17-22) A call to obedience, reverence, and compassion.

For the LORD your God *is* God of gods and Lord of lords, the great God, mighty and awesome, who shows no partiality nor takes a bribe. He

administers justice for the fatherless and the widow, and loves the stranger, giving him food and clothing. Therefore love the stranger, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt. You shall fear the LORD your God; you shall serve Him, and to Him you shall hold fast, and take oaths in His name. He *is* your praise, and He *is* your God, who has done for you these great and awesome things which your eyes have seen. Your fathers went down to Egypt with seventy persons, and now the LORD your God has made you as the stars of heaven in multitude.

a. **The LORD your God is God of gods and LORD of lords, the great God, mighty and awesome:**

The basis of this brief section of commands is set in the character of God.

b. **The great God, mighty and awesome:**

When God requires us to show justice (**no partiality nor takes a bribe**), compassion (**loves the stranger**), and reverence (**take oaths in His name**), it is because these virtues answer to aspects in God's own character.

c. **Who has done for you these great and awesome things:**

The obedience God calls us to is always set in the context of what He did for us. Our service and obedience unto the LORD is based on what He has done for us, and

is to be the grateful response to His goodness.

If there is a lack in obedience and reverence, there is almost always a lack of appreciation for what the LORD has done.

d. **He is your praise:** This is true in two senses. First, He is the *object* of our praise; second, He is also the One who makes us *praiseworthy*. Any wisdom, beauty, or skill we show is not to our praise - but **He is your praise**.

© 2006 David Guzik - No distribution beyond personal use without permission **2** I will write on the tablets the same words that were on the first tablets you broke, and you must put them into the ark.” **3** So I made an ark of acacia wood

and carved out two stone tablets just like the first ones. Then I went up the mountain with the two tablets in my hands. **4** The LORD then wrote on the tablets the same words, the ten commandments, which he had spoken to you at the mountain from the middle of the fire at the time of that assembly, and he gave them to me. **5** Then I turned, went down the mountain, and placed the tablets into the ark I had made – they are still there, just as the LORD commanded me.

6 “During those days the Israelites traveled from Beeroth Bene-Yaaqan to Moserah. There Aaron died and was buried, and his son Eleazar became priest in his place.

7 From there they traveled to Gudgodah, and from Gudgodah to Jotbathah, a place of flowing streams. **8** At that time the LORD set apart the tribe of Levi to carry the ark of the LORD’s covenant, to stand before the LORD to serve him, and to formulate blessings in his name, as they do to this very day. **9** Therefore Levi has no allotment or inheritance among his brothers; the LORD is his inheritance just as the LORD your God told him. **10** As for me, I stayed at the mountain as I did the first time, forty days and nights. The LORD listened to me that time as well and decided not to destroy you. **11** Then he said to me, “Get up, set out leading the people so they may go and possess the land I promised to give to their ancestors.”

12 Now, Israel, what does the LORD your God require of you except to revere him, to obey all his commandments, to love him, to serve him with all your mind and being, **13**

and to keep the Lord’s commandments and statutes that I am giving you today for your own good? **14** The heavens – indeed the highest heavens – belong to the LORD your God, as does the earth and everything in it. **15** However, only to your ancestors did he show his loving favor, and he chose you, their descendants, from all peoples – as is apparent today. **16** Therefore, cleanse your heart and stop being so stubborn! **17** For the LORD your God is God of gods and Lord

of lords, the great, mighty, and awesome God who is unbiased and takes no bribe, **18** who justly treats the orphan and widow, and who loves resident foreigners, giving them food and clothing. **19** So you must love the resident foreigner because you were foreigners in the land of Egypt. **20** Revere the LORD your God, serve him, be loyal to him and take oaths only in his name. **21**

He is the one you should praise; he is your God, the one who has done these great and awesome things for you that you have seen. **22** When your ancestors went down to Egypt, they numbered only seventy, but now the LORD your God has made you as numerous as the stars of the sky.

1 You must love the LORD your God and do what he requires; keep his statutes, ordinances, and commandments at all times.

Guzik - Deuteronomy 11:1-32

Deuteronomy 11 - Rewards for Obedience and

the Choice

A. How to be blessed.

1. (1-7) Remember the ways God has already blessed.

Therefore you shall love the LORD your God, and keep His charge, His statutes, His judgments, and His commandments always. Know today that *I do* not *speak* with your children, who have not known and who have not seen the chastening of the LORD your God, His greatness and His mighty hand and His outstretched arm; His signs and His acts which He did in the midst of Egypt, to Pharaoh king of Egypt, and to all his land; what He did to the army of Egypt, to their horses and their chariots: how He made the waters of the Red Sea overflow them as they pursued you, and *how* the LORD has destroyed them to this day; what He did for you in the wilderness until you came to this place; and what He did to Dathan and Abiram the sons of Eliab, the son of Reuben: how the earth opened its mouth and swallowed them up, their households, their tents, and all the substance that *was* in their possession, in the midst of all Israel; but your eyes have seen every great act of the LORD which He did.

a. **Therefore you shall love the LORD your**

God: God *commanded* Israel to love Him. Love is not a matter left entirely up to our impulse or our feelings. We choose to love the LORD or not.

i. Additionally, this reminds us of what the LORD really wants from us - our love. We could give Him a hundred other things, but none of it really matters unless we give Him our love. As Jesus said to the Ephesian church in Rev. 2:4: *Nevertheless I have this against you, that you have left your first love.* If we lose love, we lose all.

b. And keep His charge, His statutes, His judgments, and His commandments:

Love for God never goes *against* His word. Some people think their so-called love for Jesus allows them to disregard His commands, but this isn't real love at all.

i. As Jesus said in Joh. 14:15: *If you love Me, keep My commandments*. Real love for Jesus always translates into obedience.

c. Know today that I do not speak with your children, who have not known and who have not seen:

Moses addressed the generation which saw the works of God among Israel, both in blessing and chastening. He spoke to the generation that *should* know and remember.

d. **Dathan and Abiram:** These were the two key associates - perhaps the instigators - in the rebellion of Korah (Numbers 16), where God vindicated His servant Moses and leader over

Israel, when Korah, Dathan, and Abiram challenged Moses' leadership.

e. **Which He did . . . what He did . . . how He made . . . how the LORD destroyed them . . . what He did for you . . . what He did . . . every great act of the LORD which He did:** Moses called Israel to remember what *God* did in their history.

i. Most of history - both official and personal - is simply concerned with what *man* has done. But God wants us to look at history and see what *He did*. We learn far more, and are far more benefited, by looking at what God has done, rather than looking at what man has done.

2. (8-15) Blessings in the new land.

Therefore you shall keep every commandment which I command you today, that you may be strong, and go in and possess the land which you cross over to possess, and that you may prolong *your* days in the land

which the LORD swore to give your fathers, to them and their descendants, "a land flowing with milk and honey." For the land which you go to possess *is* not like the land of Egypt from which you have come, where you sowed your seed and watered *it* by foot, as a vegetable garden; but the land which you cross over to possess *is* a land of hills and valleys, which drinks water from the rain of heaven, a land for which the LORD your God cares; the eyes of the LORD your God *are* always on it, from the beginning of the year to the very end of the year. "And it shall be that if you earnestly obey My commandments which I command you today, to love the LORD your God and serve Him with all your heart and with all your soul, then I will give *you* the rain for your land in its season, the early rain and the latter rain, that you may gather in your grain, your new wine, and your oil. And I will send grass in your fields for your livestock, that you may eat and be filled."

a. **Therefore you shall keep every commandment:** Remembering what God did in history should lead Israel to greater obedience, and enable them to take the Promised Land.

b. **A land flowing with milk and honey:** The sacrifices in obedience were well worth it for Israel. They had the promise of a land which was far superior to Egypt, which did not need to be artificially irrigated, but was watered by rains which God would send upon the obedient nation.

i. In calling Egypt a place where they **watered by foot**, it refers to the system of artificial irrigation, using foot-driven pumps to lift water from the Nile to nearby fields.

Canaan was so rich it did not need this kind of irrigation.

c. **If you earnestly obey My commandments:** God simply promised to

provide for Israel if chose to obey Him and put Him first. As Jesus said: *seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you* (Mat. 6:33).

i. The promise of the blessing of rain was important, because one of the attractive of the Canaanite gods was *Baal* - the god who was said to control the weather and rain.

Perhaps the Israelites would be tempted to think, "well, we are in Canaan, and if we want rain, we should worship the Canaanite god of rain." But the LORD makes it clear that if they would worship and obey Him, He would supply abundant rain.

d. **The early raid and the latter rain:** The **early rain** fell in October and November, and was important to help soften the ground for plowing and preparing the soil for the seed. The **latter rain** fell about April, and helped the crops come to final harvest.

e. **A land for which the LORD your God cares; the eyes of the LORD your God are always on it, from the beginning of the year to the very end of the year:** God

declared His special care for the land of Israel, both then and now.

3. (16-17) The danger of blessing: Turning from God in times of prosperity.

Take heed to yourselves, lest your heart be deceived, and you turn aside and serve other gods and worship them, lest the Lord's anger be aroused against you, and He shut up the heavens so that there be no rain, and the land yield no produce, and you perish quickly from the good land which the LORD is giving you.

a. **Lest your heart be deceived:** God had to warn Israel against the deceptions of prosperity.

The person who turns from God in prosperity is simply deceived. They believe they are somehow responsible for

the blessings received, and become proud and self-reliant.

b. He shut up the heavens so that there be

no rain: Just such a judgment came upon Israel in the days of Ahab, the wicked king over Israel in the time Elijah was a prophet (1Ki.

17:1).

i. The constant need for rain kept Israel in constant dependence on the LORD. It is good for us to have things that keep us in constant dependence on the LORD. We should never despise those things and long for the day when we will no longer need to depend on God as much.

4. (18-21) Blessing is gained by keeping the Word of God always before you.

Therefore you shall lay up these words of mine in your heart and in your soul, and bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. You shall teach them to your children, speaking of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up. And you shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates, that your days and the days of your children may be multiplied in the land of which the LORD swore to your fathers to give them, like the days of the heavens above the earth.

a. Lay up these words of mine in your

heart and in your soul: God called Israel to not only read the Word of God and to know the Word of God, but to *treasure* it. In the same way, we should love God's word and miss it when we are separated from the Word of God.

We should call it to mind with longing, having laid it up in our heart and soul.

b. Speaking of them: God's Word was to be the topic of their conversation. We can fairly measure our love for God's word by how much we will talk about it with others. God

doesn't want us to have a secret love relationship with His word.

B. The Choice.

1. (22-25) The promise of blessing.

For if you carefully keep all these commandments which I command you to do; to love the LORD

your God, to walk in all His ways, and to hold fast to Him; then the LORD will drive out all these nations from before you, and you will dispossess greater and mightier nations than yourselves.

Every place on which the sole of your foot treads shall be yours: from the wilderness and Lebanon, from the river, the River Euphrates, even to the Western Sea, shall be your territory. No man shall be able to stand against you; the LORD your God will put the dread of you and the fear of you upon all the land where you tread, just as He has said to you.

a. **To love the LORD your God, to walk in**

all His ways, and to hold fast to Him: All the commandments are summarized in these three phrases. Each of these speaks of more

than a bare, compelled obedience; they speak of a real relationship of love between God and His people, with obedience flowing naturally from that relationship.

b. **The LORD will drive out . . . and you will dispossess greater and mightier nations:** God promised to fight the battles for an obedient Israel. Many desire God to fight their battles, but have little interest in obeying Him - or cultivating the deep relationship of love which obedience grows from.

c. **Every place on which the sole of your**

foot treads: God repeated this promise to Joshua, just when Israel was about to cross over the Jordan River into Canaan (Jos. 1:3).

d. **No man shall be able to stand against**

you: When Israel walked in love with the LORD

and was obedient to Him, they were unbeatable. No man could defeat them. Greater was God who was with them than he who was in the world! (1Jo. 4:4)

2. (26-28) The choice: Blessing or cursing?

Behold, I set before you today a blessing and a curse: the blessing, if you obey the commandments of the LORD your God which I

command you today; and the curse, if you do not obey the commandments of the LORD your God, but turn aside from the way which I command

you today, to go after other gods which you have not known.

a. **Behold, I set before you today a**

blessing and a curse: The three great elements to the Old Covenant were the law, the sacrifice, and the choice. Israel had a choice - to obey and be blessed, or to disobey and be cursed. It was a cause and effect relationship with God.

i. It is important to recognize that we, in Jesus Christ, do not have an Old Covenant relationship with God. We expect to be blessed, not because of our obedience, but because of our position in Jesus. The curse we deserved was laid upon Him (Gal. 3:10-14). Though there may be an inherent curse of consequences in our disobedience or even in the correcting hand of God, under the New Covenant, He does not punish us or curse us - because all that we deserved, past, present, and future, was poured out upon Jesus.

b. **I set before you today:** It was up to Israel.

If they wanted to be blessed, then they should walk in obedience (as they were in the days of David and Solomon), but if they disobeyed, they would be cursed (as they were in most of the days of the later kings)

i. A choice was *required*. There was no neutral ground. God wouldn't just "leave them alone." It would either be blessing or cursing.

c. **To go after other gods which you have**

not known: Inherent in Israel's disobedience was idolatry. Whenever we walk in disobedience, we exalt ourselves against God -

and declaring that our rules, our standards, our desires, are all more important than His. This is idolatry in its most base - and common - form.

3. (29-32) Making the choice known unto the people.

Now it shall be, when the LORD your God has brought you into the land which you go to possess, that you shall put the blessing on Mount Gerizim and the curse on Mount Ebal. *Are they not on the other side of the Jordan, toward the setting sun, in the land of the Canaanites who dwell in the plain opposite Gilgal, beside the terebinth trees of Moreh?* For you will cross over the Jordan and go in to possess the land which the LORD your God is giving you, and you will possess it and dwell in it. And you shall be careful to observe all the statutes and judgments which I set before you today.

a. **You shall put the blessing on Mount**

Gerizim and the curse on Mount Ebal: The recitation of the blessings on Mount Gerizim and the curse on Mount Ebal will be detailed in later chapters. Yet it is plain that God wanted the word to get to the entire nation, because the entire nation was part of this covenant with Him.

b. **Mount Gerizim . . . Mount Ebal:** The name **Gerizim** is supposed to be associated with fruitful harvests, and the name **Ebal** is supposed to be associated with barrenness.

© 2006 David Guzik - No distribution beyond personal use without permission **2** Bear in mind today that I am not

speaking to your children who have not personally experienced the judgments of the LORD your God, which revealed his greatness, strength, and power. **3** They did not see the awesome deeds he performed in the midst of Egypt against Pharaoh king of Egypt and his whole land, **4** or what he did to the army of Egypt, including their horses and chariots, when he made the waters of the Red Sea overwhelm them while they were pursuing you and he annihilated them. **5** They did not see what he did to you in the desert before you reached this place, **6** or what he did to Dathan and Abiram, sons of Eliab the Reubenite, when the earth opened its mouth in the middle of the Israelite camp and swallowed them, their families, their tents, and all the property they brought with them. **7** I am speaking to you because you are the ones who saw all the great deeds of the LORD!

8 Now pay attention to all the commandments I am giving you today, so that you may be strong enough to enter and possess the land where you are headed, **9** and that you may enjoy long life in the land the LORD

promised to give to your ancestors and their descendants, a land flowing with milk and honey. **10** For the land where you are headed is not like the land of Egypt from which you came, a land where you planted seed and which you irrigated by hand like a vegetable garden. **11** Instead, the land you are crossing the Jordan to occupy is one of hills and valleys, a land that drinks in water from the rains, **12**

a land the LORD your God looks after. He is constantly attentive to it from the beginning to the end of the year.

13 Now, if you pay close attention to my commandments that I am giving you today and love the LORD your God and serve him with all your mind and being, **14** then he promises, "I will send rain for your land in its season, the autumn and the spring rains, so that you may gather in your grain, new wine, and olive oil. **15** I will provide pasture for your livestock and you will eat your fill."

16 Make sure you do not turn away to serve and worship other gods! **17** Then the anger of the LORD will erupt against you and he will close up the sky so that it does not rain. The land will not yield its produce, and you will soon be removed from the good land that the Lord is about to give you. **18** Fix these words of mine into your mind and being, and tie them as a reminder on your hands and let them be symbols on your forehead. **19** Teach them to your children and speak of them as you sit in your house, as you walk along the road, as you lie down, and as you get up. **20** Inscribe them on the doorframes of your houses and on your gates **21** so that your days and those of your descendants may be extended in the land which the LORD promised to give to your ancestors, like the days of heaven itself. **22** For if you carefully observe all of these commandments I am giving you and love the LORD your God, live according to his standards, and remain loyal to him, **23** then he will drive out all these nations ahead of you, and you will dispossess nations greater and stronger than you. **24** Every place you set your foot will be yours; your border will extend from the desert to Lebanon and from the River (that is, the Euphrates) as far as the Mediterranean Sea. **25** Nobody will be able to resist you; the LORD your God will spread the fear and terror of you over the whole land on which you walk, just as he promised you.

26 Take note – I am setting before you today a blessing and a curse: **27** the blessing if you take to heart the commandments of the LORD your God that I am giving you today, **28** and the curse if you pay no attention to his commandments and turn from the way I am setting before you today to pursue other gods you have not known. **29**

When the LORD your God brings you into the land you are to possess, you must pronounce the blessing on Mount Gerizim and the curse on Mount Ebal. **30** Are they not across the Jordan River, toward the west, in the land of the Canaanites who live in the Arabah opposite Gilgal near the oak of

Moreh? **31** For you are about to cross the Jordan to possess the land the LORD your God is giving you, and you will possess and inhabit it. **32** Be certain to keep all the statutes and ordinances that I am presenting to you today.

1 These are the statutes and ordinances you must be careful to obey as long as you live in the land the LORD, the God of your ancestors, has given you to possess.

Guzik - Deuteronomy 12:1-32

Deuteronomy 12 - The Worship God Commands

A. The place of worship.

1. (1-4) The command to destroy Canaanite places of worship.

These *are* the statutes and judgments which you shall be careful to observe in the land which the LORD God of your fathers is giving you to possess, all the days that you live on the earth.

You shall utterly destroy all the places where the nations which you shall dispossess served their gods, on the high mountains and on the hills and under every green tree. And you shall destroy their altars, break their *sacred* pillars, and burn their wooden images with fire; you shall cut down the carved images of their gods and destroy their names from that place. You shall not worship the LORD your God *with* such *things*.

a. **You shall utterly destroy all the places:** Before anyone can worship God, there must be some places where he will no longer worship.

There must be a destruction of the places where the ungodly worship.

i. The practice in the ancient world, which was always short on buildings, was to take a nice building such as a temple previously used to worship a prior god, and simply make it a place to worship one's own god.

The LORD God wanted none of that in His own worship. He commanded that the

places of pagan worship be completely destroyed, and that they **shall not worship the LORD your God with such things.**

ii. This is where the worship of many is corrupted. It isn't that they worship too little; they worship too much. They worship the LORD, *and* the things of the world. God doesn't want such worship. It is an abomination to Him.

iii. Many could really begin to worship God in Spirit and in truth (Joh. 4:24), if they would only "destroy" in their hearts their pagan places of worship. Because they give their hearts to so many other things, there is little to give to the LORD.

b. On the high mountains and on the hills

and under every green tree: Since much of the pagan worship of the Canaanites was a sexualized worship of fertility and nature, their shrines and temples were often in beautiful outdoor settings. God didn't want Israel to adopt this approach of worshipping the creature rather than the Creator (Rom. 1:25).

2. (5-9) The command to worship at God's appointed place.

But you shall seek the place where the LORD your God chooses, out of all your tribes, to put His name for His dwelling place; and there you shall go. There you shall take your burnt offerings, your sacrifices, your tithes, the heave offerings of your hand, your vowed offerings, your freewill offerings, and the firstborn of your herds and flocks. And there you shall eat before the LORD your God, and you shall rejoice in all to which you have put your hand, you and your households, in which the LORD your God has blessed you. You shall not at all do as we are doing here today; every man doing whatever *is* right in his own eyes; for as yet you have not come to the rest and the inheritance which the LORD your God is giving you.

a. **And there you shall go:** Worship was not left to the opinion or whim of the individual Israelite. They had to worship God at His prescribed place, and among other worshippers of God. Worship is not a "do as you please" or a "Lone Ranger" activity.

b. **You shall seek the place:** It may not be easy to find the place where God wants you to worship, but it is out there. There is a place where He wants you to worship. He has not called you to follow Him in isolation.

c. **There you shall take your burnt offerings, your sacrifices:** The place of worship was to be a place of atonement, confession (which was made when hands were laid on the head of the sacrificial victim), and cleansing.

d. **There you shall take . . . your tithes:** The place of worship was to be a place of giving. Of course, there were other places where an Israelite could give and be generous, but giving had to begin at the place of worship God has appointed.

i. Some have thought that because Deu. 12:6 mentions **your tithes**, that this is an *additional* tithe which was commanded of Israel, on top of the tithe commanded in Numbers 18. Some even call this the "festival tithe." But in context, this passage is only speaking of *where* to bring the tithe, not commanding an additional one to be brought.

e. **There you shall eat before the LORD your God:** The place of worship is to be a place of joyful fellowship with God and others.

f. **Not at all as we are doing here today - every man doing whatever is right in his own eyes:** Before Israel crossed over the Jordan, during the wilderness wanderings, each Israelite pretty much conducted their own worship as they pleased. But God was not really pleased with this; worship was not a matter left up

to whatever pleased the individual. Real worship is concerned with what pleases God.

i. Much of what is called worship in today's church really isn't worship. It is self-focused, man-focused, and personal-experience-focused instead of being God focused. Much of today's worship is measured by how I feel instead of being measured by how God was honored and worshipped.

ii. "Singing should be congregational, but it should never be performed for the credit of the congregation. 'Such remarkable singing!

The place is quite renowned for its musical performances!' This is a poor achievement.

Our singing should be such that God hears it with pleasure - singing in which there is not so much art as heart, not so much of musical sound as of spiritual emotion." (Spurgeon)

3. (10-14) The joy of real worship in God's appointed place.

But *when* you cross over the Jordan and dwell in the land which the LORD your God is giving you to inherit, and He gives you rest from all your enemies round about, so that you dwell in safety, then there will be the place where the LORD your God chooses to make His name abide. There you shall bring all that I command you: your burnt offerings, your sacrifices, your tithes, the heave offerings of your hand, and all your choice offerings which you vow to the LORD. And you

shall rejoice before the LORD your God, you and your sons and your daughters, your male and female servants, and the Levite who *is* within your gates, since he has no portion nor inheritance with you. Take heed to yourself that you do not offer your burnt offerings in every place that you see; but in the place which the LORD chooses, in one of your tribes,

there you shall offer your burnt offerings, and there you shall do all that I command you.

a. There will be the place . . . the place

which the LORD chooses: A particular *place* is important to worship. The man who tells himself, "I can worship God just as well out on the golf course" is a *man doing whatever is right in his own eyes*. It is fine for him to worship God out on the golf course; but there must also be a specific *place* where he comes to worship with God's people.

i. This goes against the trend of our times.

Studies find that among baby-boomers, 70%

say that you should attend worship services

not out of a sense of duty, but only if it

"meets your needs." 80% say you can be a good Christian without attending church.

b. And you shall rejoice before the LORD

your God: Worship at God's appointed place must be marked with joy. It is a good thing to come and honor our God, and should be done with pleasure and joy.

i. "All Christian duties should be done

joyfully; but especially the work of praising

the Lord. I have been in congregations

where the tune was dolorous to the very last

degree; where the time was so dreadfully

slow that one wondered whether they would

ever be able to sing through the 119 Psalm;

whether, to use Watt's expression, eternity

would not be too short from them to get

through it; and altogether, the spirit of the

people has seemed to be so damp, so

heavy, so dead, that we might have

supposed that they were met to prepare

their minds for a hanging rather than for

blessing the ever-gracious God." (Charles Spurgeon, *Praise*

Thy God, O Zion) ii. "We ought not to worship God in a half-

hearted sort of way; as if it were now our duty to bless God, but we felt it to be a weary business, and we would get it through as quickly as we could, and have done with it; and the sooner the better. No, no; 'All that is within me, bless his holy name.' Come, my heart, wake up, and summon all the powers which wait upon thee! Mechanical worship is easy, but worthless. Come rouse yourself, my brother! Rouse thyself, O my own soul!" (Spurgeon)

c. **And you shall rejoice:** The emphasis on **shall** shows that rejoicing is *commanded*. It is also commanded in the New Testament; *Rejoice always* (1Th. 5:16); *Rejoice in the Lord always*.

Again I will say, rejoice! (Phi. 4:4). If you can't rejoice out of feeling like it, then rejoice out of being commanded.

i. "No one duty is more pressed in both the Testaments, than this of rejoicing in the Lord always, but specially in his immediate services." (Trapp)

B. The practice of worship.

1. (15-28) Things permitted and prohibited in regard to butchering animals, sacrificing animals, and respecting the sanctity of blood.

However, you may slaughter and eat meat within all your gates, whatever your heart desires, according to the blessing of the LORD your God which He has given you; the unclean and the clean may eat of it, of the gazelle and the deer alike. Only you shall not eat the blood; you shall pour it on the earth like water. You may not eat within your gates the tithe of your grain or your new wine or your oil, of the firstborn of your herd or your flock, of any of your offerings which you vow, of your freewill offerings, or of the heave offering of your hand. But you must eat them before the LORD your God in the place which the LORD your God

chooses, you and your son and your daughter, your male servant and your

female servant, and the Levite who *is* within your gates; and you shall rejoice before the LORD

your God in all to which you put your hands.

Take heed to yourself that you do not forsake the Levite as long as you live in your land. When the LORD your God enlarges your border as He has promised you, and you say, "Let me eat meat,"

because you long to eat meat, you may eat as much meat as your heart desires. If the place where the LORD your God chooses to put His name is too far from you, then you may slaughter from your herd and from your flock which the LORD has given you, just as I have commanded

you, and you may eat within your gates as much as your heart desires. Just as the gazelle and the deer are eaten, so you may eat them; the unclean and the clean alike may eat them. Only be sure that you do not eat the blood, for the blood *is* the life; you may not eat the life with the meat. You shall not eat it; you shall pour it on the earth like water. You shall not eat it, that it may go well with you and your children after you, when you do *what is* right in the sight of the LORD. Only the holy things which you have, and your vowed offerings, you shall take and go to the place which the LORD chooses. And you shall offer your burnt offerings, the meat and the blood, on the altar of the LORD your God; and

the blood of your sacrifices shall be poured out on the altar of the LORD your God, and you shall eat the meat. Observe and obey all these words which I command you, that it may go well with you and your children after you forever, when you do *what is* good and right in the sight of the LORD your God.

a. You may slaughter and eat meat within

all your gates: In the ancient world, almost every time an animal was butchered it was sacrificed to a god. Here, the LORD made it

clear that not every slaughtered animal was considered a sacrifice to Him.

b. You may not eat within your gates the tithe . . . the firstlings of your herd . . . your freewill offerings, or of the heave

offerings: This shows that animals which were offered in sacrifice, even if the offerer was to eat a portion, could only be killed at God's appointed place of worship.

c. Only be sure that you do not eat the

blood: Since the blood was the picture of life in any animal or man (**for the blood is the life**), God would not allow Israel to eat meat that had not been properly bled. Instead, it was to be given to God by pouring it out on the earth.

2. (29-32) The worship of God must be pure.

When the LORD your God cuts off from before

you the nations which you go to dispossess, and you displace them and dwell in their land, take heed to yourself that you are not ensnared to follow them, after they are destroyed from before you, and that you do not inquire after their gods, saying, "How did these nations serve their gods?

I also will do likewise." You shall not worship the LORD your God in that way; for every abomination to the LORD which He hates they

have done to their gods; for they burn even their sons and daughters in the fire to their gods.

Whatever I command you, be careful to observe it; you shall not add to it nor take away from it.

a. That you do not inquire after their gods: Israel was commanded to guard itself against a sinful curiosity (**How did these nations serve their gods?**). There is an old proverb that says *curiosity killed the cat*, but ungodly curiosity has also killed many spiritual lives.

b. You shall not worship the LORD your

God that way: God would not accept just any offering of worship. He had to be worshipped *in Spirit and in truth* (Joh. 4:24) c. **They burn even their sons and**

daughters in the fire to their gods: This referred to the practice of Molech worship, where Canaanites offered up their children by

placing them alive on a burning hot metal statue of Molech, while drum beats drowned out the screams of the tortured infants.

i. Israel had a tragic history of following after this horrible god Molech.

- At the least, Solomon sanctioned the worship of Molech, building a temple to this idol (1Ki. 11:7).

- King Ahaz of Judah gave his own son to Molech (2Ki. 16:3).

- One of the great crimes of the northern tribes of Israel was their worship of Molech, leading to the Assyrian captivity (2Ki. 17:17).

- King Manasseh of Judah gave his son to Molech (2Ki. 21:6).

- Up to the days of King Josiah of Judah, Molech worship continued, because he destroyed a place of worship to that idol (2Ki. 23:10).

d. **Whatever I command you, be careful to**

observe it: The standard for worship was reflected in God's Word - not in human preference or opinion.

© 2006 David Guzik - No distribution beyond personal use without permission **2** You must by all means destroy all the places where the nations you are about to dispossess worship their gods - on the high mountains and hills and under every leafy tree. **3** You must tear down their altars, shatter their sacred pillars, burn up their sacred Asherah poles, and cut down the images of their gods; you must

eliminate their very memory from that place. **4** You must not worship the LORD your God the way they worship. **5** But you must seek only the place he chooses from all your tribes to establish his name as his place of residence, and you must go there. **6** And there you must take your burnt offerings, your sacrifices, your tithes, the personal offerings you have prepared, your votive offerings, your freewill offerings, and the firstborn of your herds and flocks. **7**

Both you and your families must feast there before the LORD your God and rejoice in all the output of your labor with which he has blessed you. **8** You must not do like we are doing here today, with everyone doing what seems best to him, **9** for you have not yet come to the final stop and inheritance the LORD your God is giving you. **10** When you do go across the Jordan River and settle in the land he is granting you as an inheritance and you find relief from all the enemies who surround you, you will live in safety.

11 Then you must come to the place the LORD your God chooses for his name to reside, bringing everything I am commanding you – your burnt offerings, sacrifices, tithes, the personal offerings you have prepared, and all your choice votive offerings which you devote to him. **12** You shall rejoice in the presence of the LORD your God, along with your sons, daughters, male and female servants, and the Levites in your villages (since they have no allotment or inheritance with you). **13** Make sure you do not offer burnt offerings in any place you wish, **14** for you may do so only in the place the LORD chooses in one of your tribal areas – there you may do everything I am commanding you.

15 On the other hand, you may slaughter and eat meat as you please when the LORD your God blesses you in all your villages. Both the ritually pure and impure may eat it, whether it is a gazelle or an ibex. **16** However, you must not eat blood – pour it out on the ground like water. **17**

You will not be allowed to eat in your villages your tithe of grain, new wine, olive oil, the firstborn of your herd and

flock, any votive offerings you have vowed, or your freewill and personal offerings. **18** Only in the presence of the LORD your God may you eat these, in the place he chooses. This applies to you, your son, your daughter, your male and female servants, and the Levites in your villages. In that place you will rejoice before the LORD

your God in all the output of your labor. **19** Be careful not to overlook the Levites as long as you live in the land.

20 When the LORD your God extends your borders as he said he would do and you say, "I want to eat meat just as I please," you may do so as you wish. **21** If the place he

chooses to locate his name is too far for you, you may slaughter any of your herd and flock he has given you just as I have stipulated; you may eat them in your villages just as you wish. **22** Like you eat the gazelle or ibex, so you may eat these; the ritually impure and pure alike may eat them.

23 However, by no means eat the blood, for the blood is life itself – you must not eat the life with the meat! **24** You must not eat it! You must pour it out on the ground like water. **25**

You must not eat it so that it may go well with you and your children after you; you will be doing what is right in the LORD's sight. **26** Only the holy things and votive offerings that belong to you, you must pick up and take to the place the LORD will choose. **27**

You must offer your burnt offerings, both meat and blood, on the altar of the LORD your God; the blood of your other sacrifices you must pour out on his altar while you eat the meat. **28** Pay careful attention to all these things I am commanding you so that it may always go well with you and your children after you when you do what is good and right in the sight of the LORD your God.

29 When the LORD your God eliminates the nations from the place where you are headed and you dispossess them, you will settle down in their land. **30** After they have been destroyed from your presence, be careful not to be ensnared like they are; do not pursue their gods and say, "How do

these nations serve their gods? I will do the same.” **31** You must not worship the LORD your God the way they do! For everything that is abhorrent to him, everything he hates, they have done when worshiping their gods. They even burn up their sons and daughters before their gods!

32 (13:1) You must be careful to do everything I am commanding you. Do not add to it or subtract from it!

1 Suppose a prophet or one who foretells by dreams should appear among you and show you a sign or wonder, Guzik - Deuteronomy 13:1-18

Deuteronomy 13 - Keeping the Worship of God

Pure

A. Protecting against those who would entice Israel to serve other gods.

1. (1-3) Protecting against the deceiver who comes with miraculous signs.

If there arises among you a prophet or a dreamer of dreams, and he gives you a sign or a wonder, and the sign or the wonder comes to pass, of which he spoke to you, saying, "Let us go after other gods"; which you have not known; "and let us serve them," you shall not listen to the words of that prophet or that dreamer of dreams, for the LORD your God is testing you to know whether you love the LORD your God with all

your heart and with all your soul.

a. **A dreamer of dreams:** Dreams can be from God (as in Num. 12:6, or in Gen. 37:5-11), or they can be false prophecies (as in Jer. 23:25-26). We must be careful to not put too much stock in dreams, and instead allow God to bring *confirmation* to any dream we believe brings a message from Him. It would be very unusual for God speak *alone* through a dream, without other confirmation.

b. **And the sign or the wonder comes to**

pass: Moses warned the people that there may arise from among them prophets or workers of signs who could also produce a **sign** or a **wonder**.

i. Deu. 18:22 tells what to do with a prophet who speaks a word and it does *not* come to pass. But this passage tells what to do with a prophet who speaks a word and it comes

to pass, but they then speak against what God has already revealed in His word.

c. **And the sign or the wonder comes to**

pass: This sobering fact is ignored by many Christians in our age which neglects discernment. The fact is that signs and wonders can never be *the* evidence of truth or God's hand.

i. Those who are immediately convinced at the sight of supernatural power or reality are in danger of great deception. 2Th. 2:9

reminds us that the *coming of the lawless one is according to the working of Satan, with all power, signs, and lying wonders.*

ii. This is why Jesus said *and these signs will follow those who believe* (Mar. 16:17).

Signs are to follow believers, instead of believers following signs.

d. You shall not listen to the words of that prophet or dreamer of dreams: Godly discernment will always carefully examine the

message of a spiritual leader, instead of the spiritual experiences which may surround him or her.

e. The LORD your God is testing you to know whether you love the LORD your God with all your heart:

This explains one of God's reasons in allowing such deceivers to exist among His people - to allow the hearts of His people to be tested and proven, to see if they really love the God of truth, or are merely seeking a spiritual sign or experience.

i. "And particularly there are many signs, yea, such as men may think to be wonders, which may be wrought by evil spirits, God so

permitting it for divers wise and just

reasons, not only for the trial of the good, as it here follows, but also for the punishment of ungodly men, who would not receive

Divine truths, though attested by many evident and unquestionable miracles, and therefore are most justly exposed to these temptations to believe lies." (Poole)

2. (4-5) The penalty for the deceiver who comes with miraculous signs.

You shall walk after the LORD your God and fear Him, and keep His commandments and obey His voice, and you shall serve Him and hold fast to Him. But that prophet or that dreamer of dreams shall be put to death, because he has spoken in order to turn *you* away from the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt and redeemed you from the house of bondage, to

entice you from the way in which the LORD your God commanded you to walk. So you shall put away the evil from your midst.

a. **You shall walk after the LORD:** Israel was first instructed to not let a deceiver succeed in leading them astray. No matter how attractive the deception, they were to keep focused on a faithful walk with God according to His truth.

b. **But that prophet or that dreamer of dreams shall be put to death:** Ancient Israel was a unique situation, where the civil government was also directly appointed by God and charged with maintaining spiritual order as well as civil order. Therefore, such heresy and deception was a capital crime - punishable by execution.

i. For many centuries, when the church held political power, it often exercised this penalty also. Heretics were often given over to the civil government for execution. Trapp writes in the mid seventeenth century, "This power is still in the Christian magistrate, to inflict capital punishment on gross heretics."

ii. While we admire their priorities (they judged it much more serious for a heretic to kill men's eternal souls than to kill their temporal bodies), they were ignorant of an important principle of Jesus' kingdom in

contrast to the ancient kingdom of Israel:

Jesus declared that His kingdom was *not* of this world (Joh. 18:36), while the kingdom of Israel was very much *of* this world. Never before or since has God appointed such a kingdom as Israel to be His nation in this world as He appointed ancient Israel, so it would be wrong for us to execute heretics today.

iii. Still, the church as a community and Christians as individuals should reject and refuse to support such heretics among them. They should use discernment to set aside those who promote themselves as miracle working men and women of anointing and faith, yet who teach heresy in essential doctrines.

3. (6-11) The penalty for a relative who would lead an Israelite to worship other gods.

If your brother, the son of your mother, your son or your daughter, the wife of your bosom, or your friend who is as your own soul, secretly

entices you, saying, "Let us go and serve other gods," which you have not known, neither you nor your fathers, of the gods of the people which *are* all around you, near to you or far off from you, from *one* end of the earth to the *other* end of the earth, you shall not consent to him or listen to him, nor shall your eye pity him, nor shall you spare him or conceal him; but you shall surely kill him; your hand shall be first against him to put him to death, and afterward the hand of all the people. And you shall stone him with stones until he dies, because he sought to entice you away from the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage. So all Israel shall hear and fear, and not again do such wickedness as this among you.

a. **Brother . . . your son or daughter . . . the wife . . . your friend:** If any of these close human relationships

would lead one to the worship of other gods, they were not only to be rejected (**you shall not consent to him or listen to him**), they were to be executed (**you shall surely kill him**).

i. In fact, the relative should be one of the main witnesses against the guilty party:

your hand shall be first against him to

put him to death. This was the "casting of the first stone," the initiation of execution by one of the witnesses to the capital crime.

ii. This also demonstrates that God never puts highest priority on family relationships; if a family member forsakes the LORD, we are never to follow them away from the

LORD. Jesus always comes first, as He said

in Mat. 10:37: *He who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me.*

And he who loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me.

b. **Secretly entices you:** This demonstrates how seriously God regards leading someone else into idolatry. Even if a sympathetic person entices you, and even if they do it in private, enticement to idolatry is not to be tolerated.

i. This brings to mind the words of Jesus in

Mat. 18:6: *But whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in Me to sin, it would be better for him if a millstone were hung around his neck, and he were drowned in the depth of the sea.* Anyone who leads one of God's people astray is greatly offending the heart of God.

c. **So all Israel shall hear and fear:** Many modern researchers and pundits say that capital punishment is no deterrent to crime. God says it is a deterrent (properly practiced, of course).

B. Protecting the nation as a whole against those who would lead them into idolatry.

1. (12-14a) How to deal with reports of a city given over to idolatry.

If you hear someone in one of your cities, which the LORD your God gives you to dwell in, saying, "Corrupt men have gone out from among you and enticed the inhabitants of their city, saying, 'Let us go and serve other gods'" which you have not known; then you shall inquire, search out, and ask diligently.

a. **Then you shall inquire:** If reports arose regarding an Israelite city given over to idolatry, there was first to be a careful investigation.

b. **Search out, and ask diligently:** This guarded against a harsh judgment; perhaps there were a few idolaters in the city whom

needed to be punished, but perhaps the city was not given over to idolatry. God commanded a careful investigation.

2. (14b-18) The penalty for a city given over to idolatry.

And *if it is* indeed true *and* certain *that* such an abomination was committed among you, you shall surely strike the inhabitants of that city with the edge of the sword; utterly destroying it, all that is in it and its livestock, with the edge of the sword. And you shall gather all its plunder into the middle of the street, and completely burn with fire the city and all its plunder, for the LORD

your God. It shall be a heap forever; it shall not be built again. So none of the accursed things shall remain in your hand, that the LORD may turn from the fierceness of His anger and show you mercy, have compassion on you and multiply you, just as He swore to your fathers, because you have listened to the voice of the LORD your God, to keep all His commandments which I command you today, to do *what is* right in the eyes of the LORD your God.

a. **Such an abomination:** The word **abomination** here refers to a gross, offensive idolatry. Later in Daniel and in the New Testament, the word is used in the

phrase

abomination of desolation, which refers to the ultimate idolatry of the Antichrist - the establishing of an idolatrous image of himself in the most holy place (2Th. 2:3-4).

i. "The term *abominable thing* is used in the Old Testament for something that is totally displeasing to God and denotes something

impure, unclean, and totally devoid of holiness." (Thompson)

b. **You shall surely strike the inhabitants of that city with the edge of the sword; utterly destroying it:** If the investigation finds that the city is indeed given over to idolatry, it is then to be treated as a Canaanite city. They were to **utterly** destroy the city, including its property. The property was to be given to the LORD by destroying it, a form of "sacred destruction."

i. This made certain that no one could profit materially by declaring a city given over to idolatry. If this provision were not in the Law of Moses one could imagine a city being plundered under this pretense.

ii. "The very same punishment which was inflicted upon the cities of the cursed Canaanites, to whom having made themselves equal in sin, it is but fit and just that God should equal them in punishment." (Poole)

c. **It shall be a heap forever; it shall not be built again:** The destroyed town was to be left as **a heap forever**. The word **heap** is literally *tell*, and the word *tell* is used in Arabic for any ruined sight. Throughout Israel today, one will see curious mounds rising from a plain. These *tells* are the heaped up remains of ancient destroyed cities, covered over with centuries of dust and accumulated dirt.

d. **To do what is right in the eyes of the LORD your God:** This demonstrates that Israelites were never to regard ethnic or

national bonds greater than the bonds that tied them to the LORD God; if their fellow countrymen were given over to idolatry, they were not to be spared.

i. This chapter asks an important question: What would it take to lead you away from God? Would signs and wonders do it? What if your mate forsook God, or all of your friends? What if culture, or nationalism, or ethnic ties called you away from Jesus? We must never such ties to come before our bond to Jesus. We must decide, as the song says, "Though none go with me, still I will follow."

© 2006 David Guzik - *No distribution beyond personal use without permission* **2** and the sign or wonder should come to pass concerning what he said to you, namely, "Let us follow other gods" – gods whom you have not previously known – "and let us serve them." **3** You must not listen to the words of that prophet or dreamer, for the LORD your God will be testing you to see if you love him with all your mind and being. **4** You must follow the LORD your God and revere only him; and you must observe his commandments, obey him, serve him, and remain loyal to him. **5** As for that prophet or dreamer, he must be executed because he encouraged rebellion against the LORD your God who brought you from the land of Egypt, redeeming you from that place of slavery, and because he has tried to entice you from the way the LORD your God has commanded you to go. In this way you must purge out evil from within.

6 Suppose your own full brother, your son, your daughter, your beloved wife, or your closest friend should seduce you secretly and encourage you to go and serve other gods that neither you nor your ancestors have previously known, **7** the gods of the surrounding people (whether near you or far from you, from one end of the earth to the other). **8** You must not give in to him or even listen to him; do not feel

sympathy for him or spare him or cover up for him. **9** Instead, you must kill him without fail!

Your own hand must be the first to strike him, and then the hands of the whole community. **10** You must stone him to death because he tried to entice you away from the LORD your God, who delivered you from the land of Egypt, that place of slavery. **11** Thus all Israel will hear and be afraid; no longer will they continue to do evil like this among you.

12 Suppose you should hear in one of your cities, which the LORD your God is giving you as a place to live, that **13**

some evil people have departed from among you to entice the inhabitants of their cities, saying, "Let's go and serve other gods" (whom you have not known before). **14** You must investigate thoroughly and inquire carefully. If it is indeed true that such a disgraceful thing is being done among you, **15** you must by all means slaughter the inhabitants of that city with the sword; annihilate with the sword everyone in it, as well as the livestock. **16** You must gather all of its plunder into the middle of the plaza and burn the city and all its plunder as a whole burnt offering to the LORD your God. It will be an abandoned ruin forever – it must never be rebuilt again. **17** You must not take for yourself anything that has been placed under judgment. Then the LORD will relent from his intense anger, show you compassion, have mercy on you, and multiply you as he promised your ancestors. **18** Thus you must obey the LORD your God, keeping all his commandments that I am giving you today and doing what is right before him.

1 You are children of the LORD your God. Do not cut yourselves or shave your forehead bald for the sake of the dead.

Guzik - Deuteronomy 14:1-29

Deuteronomy 14 - Living All of Your Life for the

LORD

A. Commands regarding separation from pagans.

1. (1) The command to abstain from pagan burial customs.

You *are* the children of the LORD your God; you shall not cut yourselves nor shave the front of your head for the dead.

a. **You shall not cut yourselves nor shave**

the front of your head for the dead: Among the pagan cultures surrounding Israel, it was common to cut one's self, or shave the front of one's head, **for the dead** - that is, as a part of pagan burial rituals.

i. "The cutting of the body and the shaving of the head were common mourning rites in

the ancient Near East and are referred to in many places in the Old Testament (Isa.

3:24; 15:2; 22:12; Jer. 16:6; 41:5; Eze.

7:18; Amo. 8:10; Mic. 1:16)." (Thompson)

ii. "The mutilation of the body persists still in some countries, *e.g.* in New Guinea, where a mourner, especially a woman, removes a joint of a finger, and in extreme cases, more

than one finger joint." (Thompson)

b. **You are the children of the LORD your**

God: Among Christians today, there is

something wrong if our burial customs are just as the rituals of the ungodly. Paul wrote in 1Th.

4:13: *But I do not want you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning those who have fallen asleep, lest you sorrow as others who have no hope. We may certainly mourn the passing of our loved ones, but as those who have eternal hope in Jesus, we should be different in our mourning.*

2. (2) The principle behind the commands for separation.

For you *are* a holy people to the LORD your God, and the LORD has chosen you to be a people for Himself, a special treasure above all the peoples who *are* on the face of the earth.

a. **You are a holy people:** The idea behind **holy** is "separate." The people of Israel were a people separate unto the LORD. In Jesus, we also are a holy people: *But you are . . . a holy nation* (1Pe. 2:9).

b. **The LORD has chosen you to be a people for Himself:** The people of Israel were chosen by God, to be His own special people. In Jesus, we also are a chosen people, special to God: *But you are a chosen generation . . . His own special people* (1Pe. 2:9).

c. **A special treasure:** The people of Israel were a special treasure to God. In Jesus, we also are a special treasure to God: We are *His inheritance* (Eph. 1:18).

d. **Above all the people who are on the face of the earth:** Each of these glorious privileges carried with it a special responsibility.

If God regarded Israel as something special among the nations, they had to conduct themselves as something special among the nations.

3. (3-21) The command to separate in regard to foods.

These *are* the animals which you may eat: the ox, the sheep, the goat, the deer, the gazelle, the roe deer, the wild goat, the mountain goat, the antelope, and the mountain sheep. And you may eat every animal with cloven hooves, having the hoof split into two parts, *and that* chews the cud, among the animals. Nevertheless, of those that chew the cud or have cloven hooves, you shall not eat, *such as* these: the camel, the hare, and the rock hyrax; for they chew the cud but do not have cloven hooves; they *are* unclean for you.

Also the swine is unclean for you, because it has cloven hooves, yet *does not chew* the cud; you shall not eat their flesh or touch their dead carcasses. These you may eat of all

that *are* in the waters: you may eat all that have fins and scales. And whatever does not have fins and scales you shall not eat; it *is* unclean for you. All clean birds you may eat. But these you shall not eat: the eagle, the vulture, the buzzard, the red kite, the falcon, and the kite after their kinds; every raven after its kind; the ostrich, the short-eared owl, the seagull, and the hawk after their kinds; the little owl, the screech owl, the white owl, the jackdaw, the carrion vulture, the fisher owl, the stork, the heron after its kind, and the hoopoe and the bat. Also every creeping thing that flies is unclean for you; they shall not be eaten. You may eat all clean birds. You shall not eat anything that dies *of itself*; you may give it to the alien who *is* within your gates, that he may eat it, or you may sell it to a foreigner; for you *are* a holy people to the LORD your God. You shall not boil a young goat in its mother's milk.

a. These are the animals which you may

eat: Only certain mammals were allowed to be eaten, and the rule was simple. If an animal had a divided hoof (not a single hoof as a horse has), and chewed its cud, it could be eaten. For example, the camel, the rock hyrax, and the hare all chew the cud, but do not have divided hooves - instead, they have paws - so they are considered unkosher. Additionally, the swine has a divided hoof, but does not chew the cud -

so it is considered unkosher.

b. These you may eat of all that are in the waters:

Only certain sea creatures could be eaten, and the rule was simple. Any water creature having both fins and scales was kosher and could be eaten. Therefore, most fishes were considered clean - except a fish like the catfish, which has no scales. Shellfish would be unclean, because clams, crabs, oysters, and lobster all do not have fins and scales.

c. All clean birds you may eat: Only certain birds could be eaten; though there is no rule given to determine if a bird is clean or unclean, the specifically mentioned unclean birds

(and flying **creeping things**) are either predators or scavengers; these were considered unclean.

i. Among these animals, they fall into one of three categories: *predators* (unclean because they ate both the flesh and the blood of animals), *scavengers* (unclean because they were carriers of disease, and they regularly contacted dead bodies), or

potentially poisonous or dangerous foods such as shellfish and the like. Eliminating these from the diet of Israel no doubt had a

healthy effect, and one of the reasons for the dietary laws of Israel was to keep Israel healthy!

d. **You shall not eat anything that dies of itself:** If any animal **dies of itself**, it has not been properly bled; therefore it is unkosher.

i. It was important to bleed animals before eating them, because the blood represented the life principle of the animal (Lev. 17:11), and the life principle belonged to God and

God alone. Another reason for the dietary laws was to project an important symbolism to Israel regarding blood and the sanctity of the life principle.

e. **You shall not boil a young goat in its mother's milk:** This unusual law was a command to not imitate a common pagan fertility ritual. It illustrated the third principle behind the dietary laws of Israel: They were a statement of separation from the nations, and prevented Israel from having easy fellowship

(sitting down at a common meal) with Gentiles.

i. This law, because of strange rabbinical interpretations, became the reason why one cannot have a kosher cheeseburger.

Observant Jews today will not eat milk and meat at the same meal (or even on the same plates with the same utensils cooked in the same pots), because the rabbis insist that the meat in the hamburger may have come from the calf of the cow that gave the milk for the cheese, and the cheese and the meat would "boil" together in one's stomach, and be a violation of this command.

B. The command of the tithe.

1. (22-23) The command to tithe.

You shall truly tithe all the increase of your grain that the field produces year by year. And you shall eat before the LORD your God, in the place where He chooses to make His name abide, the tithe of your grain and your new wine and your oil, of the firstborn of your herds and your flocks, that you may learn to fear the LORD your God always.

a. **You shall truly tithe:** The word **truly** is important; since the tithe described giving ten percent, God commanded that it *really* be ten percent. One might easily imagine Israelites discovering ways to give God less than **truly** ten percent.

b. **All the increase of your grain:** Seemingly, this meant the grain left over after the seed-grain was taken out. This meant that the tithe was assessed on the *income*, not on the total *assets*.

c. **You shall eat before the LORD:** When the tithe was delivered to the tabernacle (and later, to the temple), a portion of the tithe was enjoyed in a ceremonial meal "with" the LORD.

The remainder was given to the priest.

d. **That you may learn to fear the LORD**

your God always: This was the purpose of tithing; to build an honor and reverence for God. The paraphrase in the Living Bible puts it plainly: *The purpose of tithing is to teach you always to put God first in your lives* (Deu.

14:23b, Living Bible).

2. (24-27) "Long-distance" tithing.

But if the journey is too long for you, so that you are not able to carry *the tithe*, or if the place where the LORD your God chooses to put His name is too far from you, when the LORD your

God has blessed you, then you shall exchange *it* for money, take the money in your hand, and go to the place which the LORD your God chooses.

And you shall spend that money for whatever your heart desires: for oxen or sheep, for wine or similar drink, for whatever your heart desires; you shall eat there before the LORD your God, and you shall rejoice, you and your household.

You shall not forsake the Levite who *is* within your gates, for he has no part nor inheritance with you.

a. **But if the journey is too long for you:** Since the tithe was to be brought to one place for the whole nation, some would be farther than others. And, if someone was far away, they would find it difficult to transport the grain and livestock the tithe required.

b. **You shall exchange it for money:** If distance prevented the easy transport of the animals, they could exchange their tithe for money, and then use the money to tithe with when they came to the tabernacle (and later, the temple).

c. **You shall rejoice, you and your household:** Laws like this show us that God is a common-sense God. He does not place unreasonable demands on His people. He made a way for them to more conveniently tithe.

3. (28-29) The third-year tithe.

At the end of *every* third year you shall bring out the tithe of your produce of that year and store *it* up within your gates. And the Levite, because he has no portion nor inheritance with you, and the stranger and the fatherless and the widow

who *are* within your gates, may come and eat and be satisfied, that the LORD your God may bless you in all the work of your hand which you do.

a. **At the end of every third year you shall bring out the tithe of your produce of that year:** Some have said this speaks of another tithe (sometimes called the "poor tithe") to be brought every three years. Yet since it speaks of **the tithe**, and since it also went to the Levite and not only to the poor, it is best to understand that this was not an additional tithe, but a command that once every three years the tithe also be available to the poor, not only to the Levite.

i. As Kalland points out: "The Jewish rabbis have usually held that there were three tithes: (1) for the priests and Levites, (2) for the communal meals, (3) every third year for the nonlanded (i.e., the Levites, aliens, fatherless, and widows)." Kalland goes on to object to this rabbinic approach, and accurately observes, "So all the designations of tithes speak of one basic tithe to be put to various uses."

b. **That the LORD your God may bless you in all the work of your hand which you do:** God will bless the giving heart. Ask anyone who gives as the Bible instructs them to give - they are blessed.

i. The New Testament nowhere specifically commands tithing, but it certainly does speak of it in a positive light, if it is done with a right heart (Luk. 11:42).

ii. It is also important to understand that tithing is not a principle dependent on the Mosaic Law; as Heb. 7:5-9 explains, tithing was practiced and honored by God before the law of Moses.

iii. What the New Testament does speak with great clarity on is the principle of giving; that giving should be regular,

planned, proportional, and private (1Co. 16:1-4); that it must be generous, freely given, and cheerful (2 Corinthians 9).

iv. Since the New Testament doesn't emphasize tithing, one might not be strict on it for Christians (though some Christians do argue against tithing on the basis of self-interest). Yet since giving is to be proportional, we should be giving *some* percentage - and ten percent is a good benchmark - and *starting* place. For some to give ten percent is nowhere near enough; for others, at their present time, five percent may be a massive step of faith.

v. If our question is, "How little can I give and still be pleasing to God?" our heart isn't in the right place at all. We should have the attitude of some early Christians, who essentially said: "We're not under the tithe - we can give *more!*" Giving and financial management is a *spiritual* issue, not just a financial one (Luk. 16:11).

© 2006 David Guzik - No distribution beyond personal use without permission **2** For you are a people holy to the LORD your God. He has chosen you to be his people, prized above all others on the face of the earth. **3** You must not eat any forbidden thing. **4** These are the animals you may eat: the ox, the sheep, the goat, **5** the ibex, the gazelle, the deer, the wild goat, the antelope, the wild oryx, and the mountain sheep.

6 You may eat any animal that has hooves divided into two parts and that chews the cud. **7** However, you may not eat the following animals among those that chew the cud or those that have divided hooves: the camel, the hare, and the rock badger. (Although they chew the cud, they do not have divided hooves and are therefore ritually impure to you). **8** Also the pig is ritually impure to you; though it has divided hooves, it does not chew the cud.

You may not eat their meat or even touch their remains. **9**

These you may eat from among water creatures: anything with fins and scales you may eat, **10** but whatever does not have fins and scales you may not eat; it is ritually impure to you. **11** All ritually clean birds you may eat. **12**

These are the ones you may not eat: the eagle, the vulture, the black vulture, **13** the kite, the black kite, the dayyah after its species, **14** every raven after its species, **15** the ostrich, the owl, the seagull, the falcon after its species, **16** the little owl, the long-eared owl, the white owl, **17** the jackdaw, the carrion vulture, the cormorant, **18** the stork, the heron after its species, the hoopoe, the bat, **19** and any winged thing on the ground are impure to you – they may not be eaten. **20** You may eat any clean bird. **21** You may not eat any corpse, though you may give it to the resident foreigner who is living in your villages and he may eat it, or you may sell it to a foreigner. You are a people holy to the LORD your God. Do not boil a young goat in its mother's milk.

22 You must be certain to tithe all the produce of your seed that comes from the field year after year. **23** In the presence of the LORD your God you must eat from the tithe of your grain, your new wine, your olive oil, and the firstborn of your herds and flocks in the place he chooses to locate his name, so that you may learn to revere the LORD your God always.

24 When he blesses you, if the place where he chooses to locate his name is distant, **25**

you may convert the tithe into money, secure the money, and travel to the place the LORD your God chooses for himself. **26** Then you may spend the money however you wish for cattle, sheep, wine, beer, or whatever you desire.

You and your household may eat there in the presence of the LORD your God and enjoy it. **27** As for the Levites in your villages, you must not ignore them, for they have no allotment or inheritance along with you. **28** At the end of every three years you must bring all the tithe of your produce, in that very year, and you must store it up in your

villages. **29** Then the Levites (because they have no allotment or inheritance with you), the resident foreigners, the orphans, and the widows of your villages may come and eat their fill so that the LORD your God may bless you in all the work you do.

1 At the end of every seven years you must declare a cancellation of debts.

Guzik - Deuteronomy 15:1-23

Deuteronomy 15 - Laws Regarding the Poor

A. Laws regarding the poor.

1. (1-6) Release of debts every seventh year.

At the end of *every* seven years you shall grant a release *of debts*. And this *is* the form of the release: Every creditor who has lent *anything* to his neighbor shall release *it*; he shall not require *it* of his neighbor or his brother, because it is called the Lord's release. Of a foreigner you may require *it*; but you shall give up your claim to what is owed by your brother, except when there may be no poor among you; for the LORD will greatly bless you in the land which the LORD your God is giving you to possess *as* an inheritance; only if you carefully obey the voice of the LORD your God, to observe with care all these commandments which I command you

today. For the LORD your God will bless you just as He promised you; you shall lend to many nations, but you shall not borrow; you shall reign over many nations, but they shall not reign over you.

a. **You shall grant a release of debts:** In Israel, money was always loaned with the understanding that every seventh year, debts

would be canceled. So there was no long-term debt in this sense - money could never be borrowed, or owed, for more than six years.

b. **It is the LORD's release:** This was an important matter to God; the release was said to be **the LORD's release**. As Israel obeyed this command, there would never be a

permanent under-class in Israel. Some might go through a bad period, but would have the opportunity to rebuild their lives financially on a regular basis.

c. **When there may be no poor among you:** God established an economic system wherein no one *had* to be chronically poor. If people would obey the LORD, He would bless (both sovereignly and as the natural result of the obedience), and they would not be poor.

i. However, Deu. 15:11 - just a few verses down - states: *For the poor will never cease from the land.* Is God contradicting Himself?

Not at all. He knows that He has established a system where no one *must* be chronically poor, yet He knew that because of disobedience, some would, and there would

always be the poor in Israel.

ii. So, God did not guarantee prosperity for any one in Israel; but He did guarantee opportunity for prosperity for an obedient Israel.

d. **You shall lend to many nations:** If Israel obeyed and the individual citizens of Israel enjoyed the blessing of God's prosperity, then they would as a nation be prosperous, and blessed above other nations.

2. (7-11) The command to be generous to the poor.

If there is among you a poor man of your brethren, within any of the gates in your land which the LORD your God is giving you, you shall not harden your heart nor shut your hand from your poor brother, but you shall open your hand wide to him and willingly lend him sufficient for his need, whatever he needs. Beware lest there be a wicked thought in your heart, saying, "The seventh year, the year of release, is at hand,"

and your eye be evil against your poor brother and you give him nothing, and he cry out to the LORD against you, and it

become sin among you.

You shall surely give to him, and your heart should not be grieved when you give to him, because for this thing the LORD your God will bless you in all your works and in all to which you put your hand. For the poor will never cease from the land; therefore I command you, saying, "You shall open your hand wide to your brother, to your poor and your needy, in your land."

a. You shall not harden your heart nor shut your hand from your poor brother:

The law of release in the seventh year was never to be used to discourage giving to those in need. The law might discourage *lending* to the poor, therefore God wanted Israel to be generous givers to those in need.

b. Of your brethren: This reminds us of Gal.

6:10 - *Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all, especially to those who are of the household of faith.* Our charitable giving is to begin with those brothers and sisters closest to us, though it certainly can extend outward from there.

3. (12-15) The command to release slaves every seventh year.

If your brother, a Hebrew man, or a Hebrew woman, is sold to you and serves you six years, then in the seventh year you shall let him go free from you. And when you send him away free from you, you shall not let him go away empty-

handed; you shall supply him liberally from your flock, from your threshing floor, and from your winepress. *From what* the LORD has blessed you with, you shall give to him. You shall remember that you were a slave in the land of Egypt, and the LORD your God redeemed you; therefore I command you this thing today.

a. In the seventh year you shall let him go free from you: Even as debts were to be canceled every seventh year, so were slaves to be freed. The slaves thought of here are

those who have had to sell themselves into slavery because of their debt. This made certain that a "bankruptcy" did not harm an Israelite all their life. The worst that could happen is they would have to serve someone without pay for six years.

b. You shall not let him go away empty-

handed: God commanded generosity to the departing slave, giving him something to start his new life with. This would give the slave about to be freed hope and greater incentive to please his master.

4. (16-18) The law of the bond-slave.

And if it happens that he says to you, "I will not go away from you," because he loves you and your house, since he prospers with you, then you shall take an awl and thrust *it* through his ear to the door, and he shall be your servant forever.

Also to your female servant you shall do likewise.

It shall not seem hard to you when you send him away free from you; for he has been worth a double hired servant in serving you six years.

Then the LORD your God will bless you in all that you do.

a. If it happens that he says to you, "I will not go away from you" : If a slave loved his master, and wanted to continue to serve him, he was not required to leave his master at the seventh year.

b. Because he loves you . . . you shall take an awl and thrust it through his ear to the door: The willing slave could stay, and his status was declared by piercing through his ear lobe with an awl at the door of his master's home. In this, he declared his love and devotion to his master - a willing slave, who was free to choose and yet chose his master.

i. Jesus is the great fulfillment of this willing slave. Jesus said prophetically in Psa. 40:6: *My ears You have opened*, it speaks of this

"opening" of the ear in the bond-slave ceremony. He was the willing bond-slave of God the Father.

ii. Isa. 50:5-7 shows that Jesus' character as the willing slave was most perfectly shown in His sufferings at the cross: *The Lord GOD*

has opened My ear; and I was not rebellious, nor did I turn away. I gave My back to those who struck Me, and My cheeks to those who plucked out the beard; I did not hide My face from shame and spitting. For the Lord GOD will help Me; therefore I will not be disgraced; Therefore I have set My face like a flint, and I know that I will not be ashamed.

iii. The Christian is also to be a willing slave of God. The common New Testament word *doulos* describes this kind of slave. Hiebert says of *doulos*, "a slave, a bondservant, one who is in a permanent relation of servitude to another . . . Among the Greeks, with their strong sense of personal freedom, the term carried a degrading connotation."

c. **He shall be your servant forever:** Once agreeing to be a bond slave, that one was committed to their master forever. It was a permanent relationship.

i. Pagans had a custom of branding the slave with the name or the sign of the owner; Paul refers to himself as just such a slave in Gal.

6:17: *From now on, let no one trouble me, for I bear in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus.* Paul was a slave for life to Jesus.

B. The law of the firstborn.

1. (19) The principle of the firstborn.

All the firstborn males that come from your herd and your flock you shall sanctify to the LORD

your God; you shall do no work with the firstborn of your herd, nor shear the firstborn of your flock.

a. **Sanctify to the LORD:** This means to "set apart to the LORD"; the firstborn was to be set apart to God. The firstborn animal was not be used as regular domesticated animal - **you**

shall do no work with the firstborn of your herd, not shear the firstborn of your flock.

b. **All the firstborn males:** This was for three reasons. First, because Israel was God's firstborn (Exo. 4:22), and this honored that fact.

Second, because the firstborn was thought to be the best, and the best was always given to God. Finally, it was to be a reminder to all generations of when God redeemed Israel, His firstborn.

2. (20-23) What to do with the giving of the firstborn.

You and your household shall eat *it* before the LORD your God year by year in the place which the LORD chooses. But if there is a defect in it, *if it is* lame or blind *or has* any serious defect, you shall not sacrifice it to the LORD your God. You may eat it within your gates; the unclean and the clean *person* alike *may eat it, as if it were* a gazelle or a deer. Only you shall not eat its blood; you shall pour it on the ground like water.

a. **You and your household shall eat it**

before the LORD your God: When the firstborn animal was brought to the tabernacle (or later, the temple) and given to the priests for sacrifice unto the LORD, a portion of the sacrifice went to the family that brought the animal. It was given so that they could eat a joyful ceremonial meal before the LORD.

b. **If there is any defect in it:** If this was the case, the animal was given to the priests, but not sacrificed unto the LORD - or, it was redeemed for money and the money given unto the LORD.

© 2006 David Guzik - No distribution beyond personal use without permission **2** This is the nature of the cancellation: Every creditor must remit what he has loaned to another person; he must not force payment from his fellow Israelite, for it is to be recognized as “the LORD’s cancellation of debts.” **3**

You may exact payment from a foreigner, but whatever your fellow Israelite owes you, you must remit. **4** However, there should not be any poor among you, for the LORD will surely bless you in the land that he is giving you as an inheritance, **5** if you carefully obey him by keeping all these commandments that I am giving you today. **6** For the LORD your God will bless you just as he has promised; you will lend to many nations but will not borrow from any, and you will rule over many nations but they will not rule over you.

7 If a fellow Israelite from one of your villages in the land that the LORD your God is giving you should be poor, you must not harden your heart or be insensitive to his impoverished condition. **8** Instead, you must be sure to open your hand to him and generously lend him whatever he needs. **9** Be careful lest you entertain the wicked thought that the seventh year, the year of cancellation of debts, has almost arrived, and your attitude be wrong toward your impoverished fellow Israelite and you do not lend him anything; he will cry out to the LORD against you and you will be regarded as having sinned. **10** You must by all means lend to him and not be upset by doing it, for because of this the LORD your God will bless you in all your work and in everything you attempt. **11** There will never cease to be some poor people in the land; therefore, I am commanding you to make sure you open your hand to your fellow Israelites who are needy and poor in your land.

12 If your fellow Hebrew – whether male or female – is sold to you and serves you for six years, then in the seventh year you must let that servant go free. **13** If you set them free, you must not send them away empty-handed. **14** You must

supply them generously from your flock, your threshing floor, and your winepress – as the LORD your God has blessed you, you must give to them.

15 Remember that you were a slave in the land of Egypt and the LORD your God redeemed you; therefore, I am commanding you to do this thing today. **16** However, if the servant says to you, “I do not want to leave you,” because he loves you and your household, since he is well off with you, **17** you shall take an awl and pierce a hole through his ear to the door. Then he will become your servant permanently (this applies to your female servant as well).

18 You should not consider it difficult to let him go free, for he will have served you for six years, twice the time of a hired worker; the LORD your God will bless you in everything you do.

19 You must set apart for the LORD your God every firstborn male born to your herds and flocks. You must not work the firstborn of your bulls or shear the firstborn of your flocks.

20 You and your household must eat them annually before the LORD your God in the place he chooses. **21** If they have any kind of blemish – lameness, blindness, or anything else – you may not offer them as a sacrifice to the LORD your God. **22** You may eat it in your villages, whether you are ritually impure or clean, just as you would eat a gazelle or an ibex. **23** However, you must not eat its blood; you must pour it out on the ground like water.

1 Observe the month Abib and keep the Passover to the LORD your God, for in that month he brought you out of Egypt by night.

Guzik - Deuteronomy 16:1-22

Deuteronomy 16 - The Three Major Feasts

A. The observance of Passover.

1. (1-2) The sacrifice of the Passover.

Observe the month of Abib, and keep the

Passover to the LORD your God, for in the month of Abib the LORD your God brought you out of Egypt by night. Therefore

you shall sacrifice the Passover to the LORD your God, from the flock and the herd, in the place where the LORD chooses to put His name.

a. You shall sacrifice the Passover to the LORD . . . in the place where the LORD chooses to put His name: At the first

Passover, each family in Israel sacrificed the Passover lamb at their home. But when Israel came into the Promised Land, the sacrifice was to be made at the tabernacle (and later, the temple).

b. For in the month of Abib the LORD your God brought you out of Egypt by night:

Exodus 12 describes the first Passover, when Israel was delivered from Egypt, and God sent His judgment upon the firstborn of Egypt. God passed over the homes which obediently sacrificed the Passover lamb and applied its blood to the door posts of the home.

c. Keep the Passover to the LORD:

Prophetically, the feast of **Passover** clearly presents Jesus as our Passover (1Co. 5:7), the Lamb of God who was sacrificed, and whose blood was received and applied, so the wrath of God would pass over us.

2. (3-4) The Feast of Unleavened Bread, associated with Passover.

You shall eat no leavened bread with it; seven days you shall eat unleavened bread with it, *that is*, the bread of affliction (for you came out of the land of Egypt in haste), that you may remember the day in which you came out of the land of Egypt all the days of your life. And no leaven shall be seen among you in all your territory for seven days, nor shall *any* of the meat which you sacrifice the first day at twilight remain overnight until morning.

a. For you came out of the land of Egypt in haste: For the first Passover, the unleavened bread was a practical

necessity; they left Egypt in such a hurry there was no time to allow for the dough to rise.

b. And no leaven shall be seen among you

in all your territory for seven days: But the Feast of Unleavened Bread, following Passover, continued to be important. Leaven was a picture of sin and corruption, because of the way a little leaven would influence a whole lump of dough, and also because of the way leaven would "puff up" the lump - even as pride and sin makes us "puffed up."

i. Significantly, God called them to walk *unleavened* after their initial deliverance from Egypt; symbolically, they were being called to a pure walk with the LORD.

ii. Some suggest there was also a health aspect in getting rid of all the leaven; that since they used a piece of dough from the previous batch to make the bread for that day, and did so repeatedly, that harmful bacteria could take hold in the dough - so it was good to remove all leaven and start all over at least once a year.

iii. The purity of the feast of Unleavened Bread followed upon the blood-deliverance of Passover; we can only walk in purity before the LORD after we have had the blood-deliverance at the cross.

c. You shall eat no leavened bread with it:

Prophetically, the feast of Unleavened Bread relates to the time of Jesus' burial, after His perfect, sinless sacrifice on the cross, during which He was received by God the Father as holy and complete (the *Holy One* who would not see *corruption*, Act. 2:27), perfectly accomplishing our salvation.

i. We may regard the burial (or actually, entombment) of Jesus as a small thing in God's redemptive plan; but it was an

essential part of Paul's gospel: *For I delivered to you first of all that which I also received: That Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures* (1Co. 15:3-4).

3. (5-8) Regulations for Passover.

You may not sacrifice the Passover within any of your gates which the LORD your God gives you; but at the place where the LORD your God

chooses to make His name abide, there you shall sacrifice the Passover at twilight, at the going down of the sun, at the time you came out of Egypt. And you shall roast and eat *it* in the place which the LORD your God chooses, and in the morning you shall turn and go to your tents. Six days you shall eat unleavened bread, and on the seventh day there *shall be* a sacred assembly to the LORD your God. You shall do no work *on it*.

B. The observance of the Feast of Weeks (Pentecost).

1. (9-10) The Feast of Weeks.

You shall count seven weeks for yourself; begin to count the seven weeks from *the time* you begin *to put* the sickle to the grain. Then you shall keep the Feast of Weeks to the LORD your God with the tribute of a freewill offering from your hand, which you shall give as the LORD your God blesses you.

a. **From the time you begin to put the**

sickle to the grain: The Feast of Weeks (or Pentecost) was a feast associated with the joy of harvest, during which Israelites brought a **freewill offering** unto the LORD, as a demonstration of the thanks in their heart.

2. (11-12) The joy of Pentecost.

You shall rejoice before the LORD your God, you and your son and your daughter, your male servant and your female servant, the Levite who *is* within your gates, the stranger and the fatherless and the widow

who *are* among you, at the place where the LORD your God chooses to make His name abide. And you shall remember that you were a slave in Egypt, and you shall be careful to observe these statutes.

a. **You shall rejoice:** There was no ritual of sacrifice commanded at Pentecost. Instead, it was a time of joyful thanksgiving for the harvest, and heart-response to God.

b. **You shall remember:** The joy of Pentecost was intensified by remembering the bondage Israel had escaped.

c. **And you shall remember that you were a slave in Egypt, and you shall be careful to observe these statutes:** Lev. 23:15-21

describes how, at the feast of Pentecost, Israel was to celebrate by bringing a **new grain offering to the LORD** and by waving two

loaves of *leavened* bread unto the LORD.

Prophetically, this is a powerful picture of the work of God in the New Covenant, fulfilled at the Day of Pentecost in Acts 2.

i. No atoning sacrifice was necessary because the price had already been paid by Jesus.

ii. There was a great harvest unto God, and great thanksgiving for that harvest.

iii. The response to God on the day of Pentecost was not done out of obligation to a particular law. It was the joyful heart-response of God's people unto Him.

iv. The church, founded on the day of Pentecost, would include the "leavened bread" of the Gentiles, waved as holy before God - made holy by the work of Jesus the Messiah.

C. The observance of the Feast of Tabernacles.

1. (13-15) How to observe the Feast of Tabernacles.

You shall observe the Feast of Tabernacles seven days, when you have gathered from your threshing floor and from your winepress. And you shall rejoice in your feast, you and your son and your daughter, your male servant and your female servant and the Levite, the stranger and the fatherless and the widow, who *are* within your gates. Seven days you shall keep a sacred feast to the LORD your God in the place which the LORD chooses, because the LORD your God will bless you in all your produce and in all the work of your hands, so that you surely rejoice.

a. You shall observe the Feast of

Tabernacles seven days: This was to happen on the fifteenth day of the Jewish month Tishri (on the Jewish ceremonial calendar). The Feast of Tabernacles was a time to rejoice in God's deliverance and provision for Israel during the time of wilderness wandering; a time when having come into the Promised Land, looking back with gratitude on all God had done to deliver and provide in the tough times of the wilderness.

i. Lev. 23:39 says of the Feast of Tabernacles, *on the first day there shall be a sabbath-rest, and on the eighth day a sabbath rest*. The Feast of Tabernacles began and ended in rest; it was all about celebration and rest and refreshment, remembering what God had done.

b. Your manservant and your maidservant: We see here also the great *social* good God intended in the Sabbath and in the Feasts; in other ancient cultures, there was no day off, and there were no holidays. Here, God *commands* both holidays and "vacation days" - all centered on Him!

c. Observe the Feast of Tabernacles:

Prophetically, the feast of **Tabernacles** speaks of the millennial rest of comfort of God for Israel and all of God's

people; it is all about peace and rest, from beginning to end.

i. Tabernacles is specifically said to be celebrated during the millennium (Zec. 14:16-19).

2. (16-17) The command to observe each of these three feasts.

Three times a year all your males shall appear before the LORD your God in the place which He chooses: at the Feast of Unleavened Bread, at the Feast of Weeks, and at the Feast of

Tabernacles; and they shall not appear before the LORD empty-handed. Every man *shall give* as he is able, according to the blessing of the LORD your God which He has given you.

a. **Three times a year all your males shall appear before the LORD your God in the**

place which He chooses: These were only three (four, actually, counting the feast of unleavened bread as a separate feast) of the

seven feasts of Israel. Not mentioned in this chapter are the feasts of trumpets, of firstfruits, and of the Day of Atonement.

b. **All your males:** Yet, the feasts mentioned in this chapter were the most important feasts in Israel - and every Jewish man, to the best of His ability, was to go to the place of the tabernacle (or later, the temple) and celebrate this feast with the whole nation of Israel.

i. Jesus was obedient to this command; He made the trip from Galilee to Jerusalem to be at these feasts (Luk. 2:41, Joh. 7:2, 10).

3. (18-20) The appointment of judges and officers.

You shall appoint judges and officers in all your gates, which the LORD your God gives you, according to your tribes, and they shall judge the people with just judgment. You shall not pervert justice; you shall not show partiality, nor take a bribe, for a bribe blinds the eyes of the wise and twists the

words of the righteous. You shall follow what is altogether just, that you may live and inherit the land which the LORD your God is giving you.

a. **You shall appoint judges and officers in all your gates:** God knew the importance of just judges and officials to a nation. Therefore God commanded that they **shall not pervert justice . . . nor show partiality . . . nor take a bribe**; instead, they were to **follow what is altogether just**. A judge has the responsibility to do *justice*.

4. (21-22) Prohibition of idol trees and pillars.

You shall not plant for yourself any tree, as a wooden image, near the altar which you build for yourself to the LORD your God. You shall not set up a sacred pillar, which the LORD your God hates.

a. **You shall not plant for yourself any tree, as a wooden image, near the altar:** Such sacred totems were common among the Canaanites. Israel might have been tempted to be "seeker sensitive" and add such items to their worship of the God of Israel. He wanted none of it. God says of such thing, **which the LORD your God hates**.

© 2006 David Guzik - No distribution beyond personal use without permission **2** You must sacrifice the Passover animal (from the flock or the herd) to the LORD your God in the place where he chooses to locate his name. **3** You must not eat any yeast with it; for seven days you must eat bread made without yeast, symbolic of affliction, for you came out of Egypt hurriedly. You must do this so you will remember for the rest of your life the day you came out of the land of Egypt.

4 There must not be a scrap of yeast within your land for seven days, nor can any of the meat you sacrifice on the evening of the first day remain until the next morning. **5**

You may not sacrifice the Passover in just any of your villages that the LORD your God is giving you, **6** but you

must sacrifice it in the evening in the place where he chooses to locate his name, at sunset, the time of day you came out of Egypt. **7** You must cook and eat it in the place the LORD your God chooses; you may return the next morning to your tents. **8** You must eat bread made without yeast for six days. The seventh day you are to hold an assembly for the LORD your God; you must not do any work on that day.

9 You must count seven weeks; you must begin to count them from the time you begin to harvest the standing grain.

10 Then you are to celebrate the Festival of Weeks before the LORD your God with the voluntary offering that you will bring, in proportion to how he has blessed you. **11**

You shall rejoice before him – you, your son, your daughter, your male and female slaves, the Levites in your villages, the resident foreigners, the orphans, and the widows among you – in the place where the LORD

chooses to locate his name. **12** Furthermore, remember that you were a slave in Egypt, and so be careful to observe these statutes.

13 You must celebrate the Festival of Temporary Shelters for seven days, at the time of the grain and grape harvest. **14**

You are to rejoice in your festival, you, your son, your daughter, your male and female slaves, the Levites, the resident foreigners, the orphans, and the widows who are in your villages. **15** You are to celebrate the festival seven days

before the LORD your God in the place he chooses, for he will bless you in all your productivity and in whatever you do; so you will indeed rejoice! **16** Three times a year all your

males must appear before the LORD your God in the place he chooses for the Festival of Unleavened Bread, the Festival of Weeks, and the Festival of Temporary Shelters; and they must not appear before him empty-handed. **17** Every one of you must give as you are able, according to the blessing of the LORD your God that he has given you.

18 You must appoint judges and civil servants for each tribe in all your villages that the LORD your God is giving you, and they must judge the people fairly. **19** You must not pervert justice or show favor. Do not take a bribe, for bribes blind the eyes of the wise and distort the words of the righteous. **20** You must pursue justice alone so that you may live and inherit the land the LORD your God is giving you.

21 You must not plant any kind of tree as a sacred Asherah pole near the altar of the LORD your God which you build for yourself. **22** You must not erect a sacred pillar, a thing the LORD your God detests.

1 You must not sacrifice to him a bull or sheep that has a blemish or any other defect, because that is considered offensive to the LORD your God.

Guzik - Deuteronomy 17:1-20

Deuteronomy 17 - Laws Pertaining to the Rulers

of Israel

A. Laws regarding justice and courts.

1. (1-5) Religious offenses.

You shall not sacrifice to the LORD your God a bull or sheep which has any blemish *or* defect, for that *is* an abomination to the LORD your God. If there is found among you, within any of your gates which the LORD your God gives you, a man or a woman who has been wicked in the sight of the LORD your God, in transgressing His covenant, who has gone and served other gods

and worshiped them, either the sun or moon or

any of the host of heaven, which I have not

commanded, and it is told you, and you hear *of it*, then you shall inquire diligently. And if *it is* indeed true *and* certain that such an abomination has been committed in Israel, then you shall bring out to your gates that man or woman who

has committed that wicked thing, and shall stone to death that man or woman with stones.

a. **You shall not:** This section, much like Exodus 21-23, is meant to give instructions to the judges of Israel in how to administrate justice for the nation. It is *case law*, upon which legal precedents for future cases may be understood.

b. **Which has any blemish or defect, for that is an abomination to the LORD your**

God: God commanded that no one can bring to Him a sacrifice which has **any blemish or defect, for that is an abomination to the**

LORD. God did not recognize the giving of cast-off, worthless items, as a true sacrifice unto Him. We have a tendency to always want to give God second best - if not third or fourth

best. But God will not receive such a sacrifice.

i. There are countless jokes illustrating this point. One common one describes a farmer whose cow gave birth to twins, and he

swore he would give one of the calves to God. He didn't decide which one to give to God, until one day one of the calves died.

He said to his wife: "Guess what? God's calf died today!"

ii. Israel did not always live up to this

standard: *And when you offer the blind as a sacrifice, is it not evil? And when you offer the lame and sick, is it not evil? Offer it then to your governor! Would he be pleased with you? Would he accept you favorably?" Says the LORD of hosts.* (Mal. 1:8)

iii. David powerfully illustrated the idea behind this commandment when he refused to accept the threshing floor of Araunah as a gift, which David was going to give to the LORD as the place to build the temple. David said, *nor will I offer burnt offerings to the LORD my God with that which costs me nothing* (2Sa. 24:24). David understood that if it didn't *cost* something, it wasn't a *sacrifice*.

c. Who has gone and served other gods

and worshiped them: Judges are also commanded to make sure that any who have gone after idolatry are to be investigated, and if found to be guilty, are to be executed.

2. (6-7) The standard of evidence in capital crimes.

Whoever is deserving of death shall be put to death on the testimony of two or three witnesses; he shall not be put to death on the testimony of one witness. The hands of the witnesses shall be the first against him to put him to death, and afterward the hands of all the people. So you shall put away the evil from among you.

a. Whoever is deserving of death shall be put to death on the testimony of two or three witnesses: There was never to be

capital punishment unless there was evidence from at least two independent, unimpeachable sources.

i. We may comfort ourselves that we would never judge someone guilty of murder so quickly, without proper evidence. Yet many will murder someone's reputation in their own mind or in the minds of others with *no* witnesses, much less one.

ii. God is concerned about the murder of reputation, as well as physical murder, and commands that one should *not receive an accusation against an elder except from two or three witnesses* (1Ti. 5:19) - the same standard as for proving murder.

iii. Remember 1Ti. 5:19 does not say "except from two or three gossips"; it says *except from two or three witnesses*. If a matter is false, it does not become true because many people hear it or many people repeat it.

b. The hands of the witnesses shall be the first against him to put him to death:

Additionally, the witnesses had to be so certain of what they saw, that they were willing to initiate the actual execution. This made certain that no one would be executed for a crime they did not commit.

i. This puts the words of Jesus regarding the woman taken in adultery in John 8 in perspective: *He who is without sin among you, let him throw a stone at her first* (Joh. 8:7). Jesus asked for the official witness to step forward and identify themselves on record as having witnessed this act of adultery, yet was hypocritical enough to bring the woman and not the man.

c. And afterward the hands of all the

people: The execution was a community event, in the sense that it was supported by the community. The whole village would know the justice of what was being done.

3. (8-13) Provision made for higher courts.

If a matter arises which is too hard for you to judge, between degrees of guilt for bloodshed, between one judgment or another, or between one punishment or another, matters of controversy within your gates, then you shall arise and go up to the place which the LORD your God chooses. And you shall come to the priests, the Levites, and to the judge *there* in those days, and inquire *of them*; they shall pronounce upon you the sentence of judgment. You shall do according to the sentence which they pronounce upon you in that place which the LORD chooses.

And you shall be careful to do according to all that they order you. According to the sentence of the law in which they instruct you, according to the judgment which they tell you, you shall do; you shall not turn aside *to* the right hand or *to* the left from the sentence which they pronounce upon you. Now the man who acts presumptuously and will not heed the priest who stands to minister there before the LORD your God, or the judge, that man shall die. So you shall put away the evil from Israel. And all the people shall hear and fear, and no longer act presumptuously.

a. **If a matter arises which is too hard for you to judge:** God allowed for courts of appeal in Israel. These were higher courts where cases were taken beyond the local judges to the **priests, the Levites** - who were understood to be wiser judges because of their knowledge of God's Word

b. **Now the man who acts presumptuously and will not heed the priest . . . that man shall die:** The authority of the judges had to be respected, therefore contempt of court was a capital crime. God thought it essential that the courts and the judges be respected by the people of Israel.

B. Laws pertaining to kings.

1. (14-15) God's indirect promise of a future king for Israel.

When you come to the land which the LORD your God is giving you, and possess it and dwell in it, and say, "I will set a king over me like all the nations that *are* around me," you shall surely set a king over you whom the LORD your God chooses; *one* from among your brethren you shall set as king over you; you may not set a foreigner over you, who *is* not your brother.

a. **I will set a king over me like all the**

nations that are around me: God looked

forward - some 400 years forward - into Israel's future, to the time when they would demand a king. God warned them to **set a king over you whom the LORD your God chooses**, and that person had to be an Israelite and not a foreigner.

b. **I will set a king over me:** It is interesting to consider whether or not God *wanted* an earthly king over Israel. 1Sa. 8:6-9, the record of Israel's demand for king, puts the request for a king in a negative light. One might ask if God really did want Israel to never have an earthly king, and if He wanted them to recognize Him alone as king.

i. It is a debatable issue; but consider that Israel's history without a king (the time of the book of Judges) was not a period of national glory. Perhaps we can say that God wanted Israel to have a king, but of *His* choosing, and at *His* timing. Saul is a perfect example of a king out of God's will, chosen by the nation and at their timing; David is a perfect example of a king chosen by God and in His timing.

2. (16-17) Commands for the king.

But he shall not multiply horses for himself, nor cause the people to return to Egypt to multiply horses, for the LORD has said to you, "You shall not return that way again."

Neither shall he multiply wives for himself, lest his heart turn away; nor shall he greatly multiply silver and gold for himself.

a. **He shall not multiply horses for himself:** The future king of Israel must not put undue trust in military might.

b. **Neither shall he multiply wives for himself:** The future king of Israel must not put undue emphasis on physical indulgence and personal status.

c. **Nor shall he greatly multiply silver and gold for himself:** The future king of Israel must not put undue emphasis on personal wealth.

d. **Lest His heart turn away:** Each of these issues is a matter of balance. The king had to have some military power, but not too much; one wife and certain comforts, but not too

much; some personal wealth, but not too much.

Such balances are often the hardest to keep.

i. Solomon was a notorious breaker of these commands. He had *forty thousand stalls of horses for his chariots* (1Ki. 4:26), and *Solomon had horses imported from Egypt* (1Ki. 10:28). He had *seven hundred wives,*

princesses, and three hundred concubines; and his wives turned away his heart (1Ki.

11:3). He *surpassed all the kings of the earth in riches* (1Ki. 10:23).

ii. Yet, all along, we might see Solomon knowing the commands of Deuteronomy 17, yet deceiving himself by asking the self-justifying questions, "How much is 'multiply'?

I can handle this. I haven't gone too far." It might seem self-evident that 700 wives and 300 concubines is multiplying wives to

yourself, but one should never underestimate the ability of the human heart to deceive itself in such situations.

iii. Each of these three areas reflects the places where many modern Christian leaders fall: In regard to power, pleasure, or money. God's commands for leaders have not changed; and neither has the need to be on guard against the self-deception in these things which felled Solomon.

3. (18-20) The king and the word of God.

Also it shall be, when he sits on the throne of his kingdom, that he shall write for himself a copy of this law in a book, from *the one* before the priests, the Levites. And it shall be with him, and he shall read it all the days of his life, that he may learn to fear the LORD his God and be careful to observe all the words of this law and these statutes, that his heart may not be lifted above his brethren, that he may not turn aside from the commandment *to* the right hand or *to* the left, and that he may prolong *his* days in his kingdom, he and his children in the midst of Israel.

a. **He shall write for himself:** It is striking to think of the king of Israel, laboring over parchment with a pen, making a personal copy

of the law of Israel. This shows how greatly God wanted the word of God to be on the hearts of His rulers; God wanted every king to also be a *scribe*.

i. "Incidentally, the phrase *a copy of this law* (18) appears incorrectly in the LXX as 'this second law', *to deuteronomion touto*. It was this misunderstanding that gave rise to the English name Deuteronomy." (Thompson)

b. **It shall be with him, and he shall read it all the days of his life:** The word of God was to be constant companion of the king of Israel, and something he read every day.

i. All need the word of God; but the greater our responsibilities, the greater our need to depend on the truth of God's word.

c. **That he may learn to fear the LORD his**

God and be careful to observe all the

words of this law: Staying in the word of God was intended to build a reverence for God and a holy life in the king.

i. It is striking to consider that reading a book - the Great Book, the Bible - can keep a person from sin. We may not understand all the spiritual work behind the word of God, but staying in the word will keep one from sin. It has been well written in many Bibles: "This book will keep you from sin. Sin will keep you from this book."

ii. Luther said he would rather live in hell with the Bible than to live in Paradise without the Bible.

d. **That his heart may not be lifted up:** Staying in the word of God would keep the king properly humble, and help him to not think of himself as above those he ruled over.

i. "The Scriptures, diligently read and studied, are a powerful and probable means to keep him humble, because they show him that, though a king, he is subject to a higher Monarch, to whom he must give an

account . . . sufficient to abate the pride of the haughtiest person in the world, if he duly consider it." (Poole) © 2006

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Suppose a man or woman is discovered among you - in one of your villages that the LORD your God is giving you - who sins before the Lord your God and breaks his covenant **3** by serving other gods and worshiping them - the sun, moon, or any other heavenly bodies which I have not permitted you to worship. **4** When it is reported to you and you hear about it, you must investigate carefully. If it is indeed true that such a disgraceful thing is being done in Israel, **5** you must bring to your city gates that man or woman who has done this wicked thing - that very man or

woman – and you must stone that person to death. **6** At the testimony of two or three witnesses they must be executed. They cannot be put to death on the testimony of only one witness. **7** The witnesses must be first to begin the execution, and then all the people are to join in afterward. In this way you will purge evil from among you.

8 If a matter is too difficult for you to judge – bloodshed, legal claim, or assault – matters of controversy in your villages – you must leave there and go up to the place the LORD your God chooses. **9** You will go to the Levitical priests and the judge in office in those days and seek a solution; they will render a verdict. **10** You must then do as they have determined at that place the LORD chooses. Be careful to do just as you are taught. **11** You must do what you are instructed, and the verdict they pronounce to you, without fail. Do not deviate right or left from what they tell you. **12** The person who pays no attention to the priest currently serving the LORD your God there, or to the verdict – that person must die, so that you may purge evil from Israel. **13** Then all the people will hear and be afraid, and not be so presumptuous again.

14 When you come to the land the LORD your God is giving you and take it over and live in it and then say, “I will select a king like all the nations surrounding me,” **15**

you must select without fail a king whom the LORD your God chooses. From among your fellow citizens you must appoint a king – you may not designate a foreigner who is not one of your fellow Israelites. **16** Moreover, he must not accumulate horses for himself or allow the people to return to Egypt to do so, for the LORD has said you must never again return that way. **17** Furthermore, he must not marry many wives lest his affections turn aside, and he must not accumulate much silver and gold. **18** When he sits on his royal throne he must make a copy of this law on a scroll given to him by the Levitical priests. **19** It must be with him constantly and he must read it as long as he lives, so that he may learn to

revere the LORD his God and observe all the words of this law and these statutes and carry them out. **20** Then he will not exalt himself above his fellow citizens or turn from the commandments to the right or left, and he and his descendants will enjoy many years ruling over his kingdom in Israel.

1 The Levitical priests – indeed, the entire tribe of Levi – will have no allotment or inheritance with Israel; they may eat the burnt offerings of the LORD and of his inheritance.

Guzik - Deuteronomy 18:1-22

Deuteronomy 18 - Priests and Prophets

A. The provision for priests and Levites.

1. (1-2) The inheritance of the Levites.

The priests, the Levites; all the tribe of Levi; shall have no part nor inheritance with Israel; they shall eat the offerings of the LORD made by fire, and His portion. Therefore they shall have no inheritance among their brethren; the LORD is their inheritance, as He said to them.

a. **The priests, the Levites; all the tribe of Levi; shall have no part nor inheritance with Israel:** The Levites – those of the tribe of Levi, who were the paid ministers for the nation of Israel – **shall have no inheritance among their brethren.** In other words, they were not to have allotted portions of land for their own possession.

b. **They shall eat the offerings of the LORD**

made by fire, and His portion: Instead, the Levites were to be supported by the gifts and offerings of God's people. The Levites were

permitted to receive at least of portion of most animals sacrificed to the LORD, and thus were provided with meat for food.

2. (3-5) The specific portions of the sacrificial animal set apart to the Levites.

And this shall be the priest's due from the people, from those who offer a sacrifice, whether *it is* bull or sheep: they

shall give to the priest the shoulder, the cheeks, and the stomach. The

firstfruits of your grain and your new wine and your oil, and the first of the fleece of your sheep, you shall give him. For the LORD your God has chosen him out of all your tribes to stand to

minister in the name of the LORD, him and his sons forever.

a. And this shall be the priest's due from the people, from those who offer a

sacrifice: From a typical sacrifice, the priests received the shoulder, the cheeks, and the stomach. The rest of the animal would either be burnt before the LORD, or returned to the one bringing the sacrifice so he could enjoy his own fellowship meal with the LORD.

b. Your grain and your new wine and your oil and the first of the fleece of your

sheep: The priests also received these offerings of firstfruits from the people.

3. (6-8) All the Levites had equal rights to the offerings.

So if a Levite comes from any of your gates, from where he dwells among all Israel, and comes with all the desire of his mind to the place which the LORD chooses, then he may serve in the name of the LORD his God as all his brethren the Levites *do*, who stand there before the LORD.

They shall have equal portions to eat, besides what comes from the sale of his inheritance.

B. Prescriptions for prophets.

1. (9-11) The command to reject all the occultic practices of the Canaanites.

When you come into the land which the LORD

your God is giving you, you shall not learn to follow the abominations of those nations. There shall not be found among you *anyone* who makes his son or his daughter pass through the fire, *or one* who practices witchcraft, *or* a soothsayer, or one who interprets omens, or a sorcerer, or

one who conjures spells, or a medium, or a spiritist, or one who calls up the dead.

a. **You shall not learn:** God knows that many people have a natural curiosity regarding the occult, and that curiosity often leads them to gain knowledge God commands them to leave alone.

b. **Anyone who makes his son or his daughter to pass through the fire:** This refers to the debased worship of the Canaanite god Molech, to whom children were sacrificed by burning.

c. **Or one who practices witchcraft:** The word **witchcraft** here seems to be a broad word, describing a variety of occultic activities.

Basically, anything that makes contact with the demonic or dark spiritual world.

i. Thompson on **practices witchcraft:** "A variety of devices were in use in various lands but all were designed to discern the

will of the gods. The same word in Eze.

21:21 refers to the practice of whirling arrows in a quiver and deciding the answer to the question by the first arrow thrown out."

ii. There is a modern revival of witchcraft, or Wicca, and many people claim that "white"

witchcraft (as opposed to "black" witchcraft) is a use of spiritual powers for good, as well as being a more feminist, ecology-friendly understanding of god and spirituality. But whether a witch claims to be "white" or

"black," they are still using occultic powers.

iii. Some claim that white, or "right hand path" witches are in the majority today.

They worship elements and nature deities, the "Mother Goddess," Gaia, Ashtarte, Isis, Osiris, and a host of other names for the Goddess. Characteristically they are active in

"Saving the earth" activities, due to the fact that they are pantheists (those who believe the divine life force is in everything: ever see the bumper sticker picturing a globe bearing the legend "Love Your Mother"?). They deny the existence of Satan, calling him an invention of the Christian Church. They claim to use their powers (and they do have powers) for good: sending healing energies to the sick, affirmations which bring prosperity, and loudly proclaiming their creed, "As it harm none, do as thou wilt."

It's ironic how their creed sounds so similar to that of a man who referred to himself as "The Beast, 666" - Satanist Aleister Crowley, who wrote, "Do as thou wilt shall be the whole of the Law."

iv. Of course, there are black, or "left hand path," witches. These are witches who

originally were into white witchcraft, and got hungry for more power. As their teachers noticed this power lust, they were taken

aside and told, "You are now ready to go after the higher power, and there is only one way to achieve this power. Satan is its source." Thus comes the white witch's abrupt surprise: either give up your witchly ambitions, or go for the higher power. The bottom line is that the power behind all kinds of witchcraft is Satan. He is the author of all deception, and all rebellion. To practice or approve of witchcraft is to serve Satan.

v. And this Satanic power kills. Ronald Baker was a 21 year old student at UCLA, and was found stabbed to death at the mouth of a railroad tunnel in the rocky hills above Chatsworth Park. Police first thought the mangled body was of a transient hit by a

train; but they then found an occult connection in Baker's death. The killing took place on the night of the summer solstice, and the tunnel near the park is known to police as a gathering place for devotees of the occult. Baker was involved with Wicca (described as "benevolent witchcraft"), often wore a pentagram pendant, and belonged to a UCLA metaphysical group known as Mystic Circle (from a July 1990 news article).

vi. Some who call themselves Christians are buying into this deception. Take the case of a woman who calls herself Starhawk, who is a practitioner of *Wicca* - a witch. She first learned about *Wicca* at an anthropology course at UCLA when she was 17, and she took the name Starhawk in 1975 when it came to her in a dream. After a master's degree in psychology, she began teaching at universities. She is a licensed minister of the Covenant of the Goddess and performs marriages and other ceremonies. She views the earth as a sensitive, living organism which she calls "the Goddess." Mary Elizabeth Moore of the Claremont School of Theology said of Starhawk: "Many Christians, especially women and others who are trying to reclaim creation-centered theology, find her work to be compatible with, or at least adaptable to, Christian teaching." Starhawk was scheduled to speak at the First Christian Church in Santa Monica on a Friday evening (from a June, 1993 news article).

d. **Or a soothsayer:** This has reference to astrological-type divination, predicting the future or seeking guidance through the stars, planets, clouds, or weather.

i. Kalland says that the **soothsayer**: "Is . . . predicting the future by means of physical signs (astrology)." Thompson points out "it seems to refer to divination by reading clouds, or from a root which occurs in Arabic meaning 'to make unusual noises', 'croon', 'hum', in which case it may refer to some kind of incantation."

ii. Even though Astrology is unscientific - it is based on the supposition that the sun circles the earth, and the positions of the planets

and stars have shifted, and are never consistently uniform; therefore, the houses of the Zodiac have shifted - despite all that, thirty-two million Americans believe in Astrology! There are 10,000 full time and

200,000 part time astrologers in America.

Three out of four American newspapers carry a horoscope column.

iii. So where does the real "power" of astrology come from? From what most

astrologers call "intuition" - but is really psychic knowledge and ability. Astrology is idolatry, and stems from the demonic. It

leads people away from trusting in God, and encourages them to put trust in what God created. And isn't that Satan's goal: To replace confidence in God with a dependence on anything else?

iv. Therefore, the Bible clearly forbids us to participate in astrology, which includes reading your horoscope, studying your sign,

and computing a natal chart. It is an occult art, meaning that it involves "knowledge of hidden things", seeking spiritual knowledge apart from God's revelation. It is a foundational art, which means it is the

building block for all occultists. It is studied by witches and magicians alike. Every Christian should renounce any involvement

they have ever had with astrology!

e. **Or one who interprets omens:** The word comes from the root "to hiss" or "to whisper"

and refers to psychics and fortune-tellers who use "aids" other than naturally created things to gain knowledge, tell the future, and cast spells.

i. Today, these people are the tarot card readers, crystal ball seers, tea-leaf readers, palm readers, Ouija board users, and the like. A Christian has *no business* participating or approving of any of these practices, because either they are money-grubbing frauds (at best!), or worse, they gain their knowledge from satanic, demonic, spiritual sources.

ii. This is why it is dangerous for people - especially kids - to break out the Ouija board, or do a little seance, or little "dark" magic tricks. They are tapping into a source of spiritual power that is real - yet evil, and unspeakably dangerous. Many, many people have been ruined on the rocks of "innocent"

occultic or fortune telling games, and the fact that there is a *real* power behind those things should make us all the more concerned.

iii. There is a demand for this kind of thing; why else would a homeless man in New York be arrested for stealing skulls from a

Brooklyn cemetery and selling them for use in occult ceremonies? A skull can bring as much as \$4,000 (from an August, 1991 news article).

iv. It is worth noting that Satan or his demons cannot absolutely know the future;

but they can reasonably predict the future based on their superior knowledge of people and circumstances, or predict events that they can have a hand in shaping through their own demonic influence.

f. **Or a sorcerer:** This has reference to those who use drugs or potions to cast spells, gain spiritual knowledge, or enter into altered states of consciousness. Modern drug abuse easily falls into this category, and the use of drugs has a definite *occult* connection that the drug taker may not want, but is exposed to nonetheless.

i. Clarke says of **sorcerer**: "Those who by means of drugs, herbs, perfumes, and so forth, pretended to bring certain celestial

influences to their aid." Thompson adds,

"derived from the root . . . 'to cut up', may denote one who cuts up herbs and brews them for magical purposes (*cf.* LXX *pharmaka*, drug). The term is used in Mic.

5:12 for some such material as drugs or herbs used superstitiously to produce magical effects."

g. **Or one who conjures up spells:** This is literally, "A charmer of charms" and refers to those who cast spells or charms for good or evil upon others with spiritual powers apart from God.

i. It is a glorious thing to bless another in the name of the LORD; or even to pray to God against the evil of another person. But it is always and forever wrong to use demonic, dark, pagan, or occultic powers to cast spells or charms.

h. **Or a medium:** The idea is of someone who "stands between" the physical world and the psychic world; they channel knowledge from the psychic world into the physical world.

i. Thompson notes that the **medium**:

"Spoke from within a person (Lev. 20:27)

with a twittering voice (Isa. 29:4). Those who practiced this art called up the departed from the realm of the dead, or rather, professed to do so."

ii. Those who practice such powers are really among us. In May of 1990, after a man died in the City of Industry, his corpse remained at the home of a spirit medium that had convinced his family that he could revive them man. Friday, LA County coroner's investigators picked up the decomposing body at the home of the family. The unidentified medium apparently gave the corpse back after being unable to revive the deceased.

i. **Or a spiritist:** Literally, this word refers to the "knowing ones" - those who claim unique occultic or psychic knowledge and powers - such as those on the many psychic hotlines that one can pay to call. Again, a Christian has *no business* participating or approving of any of these practices, because either they are money-grubbing frauds (at best!), or worse, they gain their knowledge from satanic, demonic, spiritual sources.

j. **Or one who calls up the dead:** This refers to the practice of necromancy, which is the conjuring up or the contacting of the dead.

i. This refers to "One who investigates, looks into, and seeks information from the dead." (Kalland) This is much on the increase in our culture; "The proportion of adults who say they have been in touch with the dead has risen from 27% to 42% during the past 11 years. Close to 20 million Americans now report mystical experiences." (McDowell, 1989)

2. (12-14) Why rejection of all these occultic actions is commanded.

For all who do these things *are* an abomination to the LORD, and because of these abominations the LORD your God drives them out from before

you. You shall be blameless before the LORD

your God. For these nations which you will

dispossess listened to soothsayers and diviners; but as for you, the LORD your God has not appointed such for you.

a. **For all who do these things are an**

abomination to the LORD: God did not take these occultic actions lightly then, nor does He now. It is consorting with the power of darkness, and always to be rejected by

Christians.

i. Our culture is becoming more and more

accepting of these occultic themes and

practices, while it is becoming more and

more intolerant of Biblical Christianity. In

1991, a ninth grade Junior High Student in

Dickson, Tennessee, sued the school board

because his teacher wouldn't accept a

research paper written on the life of Jesus.

Students were allowed to write on topics

such as the occult, reincarnation and

spiritualism, and the teacher originally only

said that the topics must be "decent." The student was

given a zero on her paper when the topic was declared

unacceptable (from

an August, 1991 news report).

ii. "It may be pertinent to comment that in our own day,

when spiritualism, astrology, teacup reading and the like are

widely

practiced, these injunctions given to ancient

Israel have a particular relevance. Not only

is it impossible to discover the future by

such practices, but the practices themselves are forbidden by God to men who call themselves members of the covenant family." (Thompson)

b. Because of these abominations the LORD your God drives them out from before you:

God's judgment was upon the Canaanites because of these occultic practices, and if Israel took up the same occultic practices, they could expect the judgment of God to also.

i. Yes, the Canaanites were sex-worshippers (in their service of the goddess Ashtaroth); and yes, they were money and success worshippers (in their service of the god Baal). But other peoples given over to sex and greed haven't been judged as severely. What made the Canaanites particularly ripe for judgment was their occultic practices, practices the people of God were strictly forbidden to imitate.

c. You shall be blameless: more than being a general call to a holy walk, this is a solemn warning to keep from *any* involvement with these detestable practices of the occult. **The LORD your God has not appointed such for you!**

i. We are to be *blameless* in regard to such things, even as the Ephesian Christians, who destroyed all things that marked the occult

in their lives (Act. 19:19-20). This is why it is dangerous for people to seek or approve of the occult, even if they don't really believe it

- even if they just kind of think it is "cool."

ii. For example, rock singer Ozzy Osbourne says that his satanic image is all an act. "We wrote a couple of songs about black magic, so what? I hammed it up, but I'm not the

devil. I don't put curses on people." But in the same interview, Osbourne refers to "the him," who is a "malevolent voice in his head that transmits destructive and self-loathing messages." Osbourne said of this voice inside him, "He's there all the time . . . I've always had a haunted head." "Innocent"

involvement with the occult didn't protect him. Satan doesn't really care if you are a true believer in him or not; just as long as he has you.

3. (15-19) The promise of a true Prophet to come.

The LORD your God will raise up for you a Prophet like me from your midst, from your brethren. Him you shall hear, according to all you desired of the LORD your God in Horeb in the day of the assembly, saying, "Let me not hear again the voice of the LORD my God, nor let me see this great fire anymore, lest I die." And the LORD

said to me: "What they have spoken is good. I will raise up for them a Prophet like you from among their brethren, and will put My words in His mouth, and He shall speak to them all that I command Him. And it shall be *that* whoever will not hear My words, which He speaks in My name, I will require *it* of him."

a. **The LORD your God will raise up for you**

a Prophet like me: Moses, by inspiration of the Holy Spirit, promised a prophet to come; a prophet that would first be **like me** - that is, like Moses.

b. **From your midst, from your brethren:** Like Moses, this Prophet would be from the midst of Israel. This not only meant that He

would be an Israelite, but that He would be a "man of the people" - He would be one of them.

c. **Him you shall hear:** Like Moses, this Prophet would command the attention of the nation. This means both that

Israel *should* listen to this Prophet, and that they *would* listen to this Prophet.

d. **According to all you desired of the LORD**

you God in Horeb: Like Moses, this Prophet would be a mediator, representing God to the people, and representing the people before God.

e. **Will put My words in His mouth:** Like Moses, this Prophet would speak God's Word.

f. **I will require it of him:** Like Moses, this Prophet's message would only be rejected at a great penalty.

g. **I will raise up for them a Prophet:** People looked for this Prophet in Jesus' day (Joh. 6:14, 7:40) and some thought that John the Baptist might be this Prophet (Joh. 1:19-21). But the

New Testament plainly tells us that Jesus is this Prophet (Act. 3:19-26, Act. 7:37).

4. (20-22) The penalty for a false prophet.

"But the prophet who presumes to speak a word in My name, which I have not commanded him to speak, or who speaks in the name of other gods, that prophet shall die." And if you say in your heart, "How shall we know the word which the LORD has not spoken?"; when a prophet speaks in the name of the LORD, if the thing does not happen or come to pass, that *is* the thing which the LORD has not spoken; the prophet has spoken it presumptuously; you shall not be afraid of him.

a. **But the prophet who presumes to speak**

a word in My name: There are those who would **presume to speak a word** in God's name. Therefore we must always, always, guard against *presumption* when we say, "The LORD told me."

i. "The difference was that, whereas the true prophet spoke for God, the false prophet spoke presumptuously, *i.e.* he

blurted out personal opinions for which there was no backing from Yahweh." (Thompson)

b. Which I have not commanded him to

speak: Some may genuinely hear from the LORD, but it is not a word that He has **commanded him to speak**. Just because God tells us something doesn't mean we should tell others.

c. Or speaks in the name of other gods: Obviously, those who presumed to "prophecy" in the name of Baal or Ashtoreth, or any number of the other false gods of the Canaanites were false prophets.

d. That prophet shall die: Simply stated, the penalty for false prophets was death.

Presumptuous speaking in the name of the LORD, disobedient speaking in the name of the LORD, and speaking in the name of false gods was simply never to be tolerated in Israel.

e. How shall we know: It is easy to tell if a prophet speaks in the name of Baal or Ashtoreth; but how can one know if a prophet

speaking in the name of the LORD is speaking presumptuously or disobediently? Simply by their accuracy.

f. If the thing does not happen or come to pass, that is the thing which the LORD has

not spoken: If a prophet says, "Thus says the LORD," claiming that something will happen, and it does not happen, then that prophet must be held accountable for that false prophecy -

and we are no longer to regard that person as a prophet.

i. Not too long ago there was a great emphasis on the "prophets" in some Christian circles, and many would prophesy that something would happen - and it did not. However, those people excused their

false prophecies by saying they were "learning" and "experimenting" and "under grace," therefore, we should not regard them as false prophets.

ii. While it is true that one may need to learn how to flow in the gifts of the Holy Spirit, no one should say something is from God unless they are assured that it is - and if they are wrong, then their own discernment and ability to hear from God are rightly called into question.

iii. Besides, if prophets were held to this standard under the Old Covenant, are we to have a lesser standard under the New Covenant? Is there more of an outpouring of the Holy Spirit now, or less? Under the New Covenant, are we more intimately guided by God, or less? It is true we are under grace, so we no longer stone false prophets - yet, we shouldn't respect them or give them the title or position of "prophet" if they are false prophets.

iv. Instead, the New Testament says all prophecy - *any* time someone says, "The LORD told me" - all prophecy should be judged: *Let two or three prophets speak,*

and let the others judge (1Co. 14:29; see also 1Jo. 4:1). It is far better to be humble and say, "I *think* the LORD may have said to me" instead of being too confident in one's ability to hear from the LORD.

v. Tom Stipe, in the foreword to *Counterfeit Revival*, speaks powerfully about the problem of false prophets in the church:

After only a couple of years, the prophets seemed to be speaking to just about everyone on just about everything. Hundreds of . . . members received the 'gift' of prophecy and began plying their trade among both leaders and parishioners. People began carrying around little notebooks

filled with predictions that had been delivered to them by the prophets and seers.

They flocked to the prophecy conferences that had begun to spring up everywhere. The notebook crowd would rush forward in hopes of being selected to receive more prophecies to add to their prophetic diaries.

Not long after 'prophecy du jour' became the primary source of direction, a trail of devastated believers began to line up outside our pastoral counseling offices. Young people promised teen success and stardom through prophecy were left picking up the pieces of their shattered hopes because God had apparently gone back on His promises. Leaders were deluged by angry church members who had received prophecies about the great ministries they would have but had been frustrated by local church leaders who failed to recognize and 'facilitate' their 'new anointing.'

After a steady diet of the prophetic, some people were rapidly becoming biblically illiterate, choosing a 'dial-a-prophet' style of Christian living rather than studying God's Word. Many were left to continually live from one prophetic 'fix' to the next, their hope always in danger of failing because God's voice was so specific in pronouncement, yet so elusive in fulfillment.

Possessing a prophet's phone number was like having a storehouse of treasured guidance. Little clutched notebooks replaced Bibles as the preferred reading material during church services.

vi. We must always guard against letting an emphasis on the "prophetic" overshadow a simple emphasis on God's Word: *The prophet who has a dream, let him tell a dream; And he who has My word, let him speak My word faithfully. What is the chaff to the wheat?" says the LORD. (Jer. 23:28) © 2006 David Guzik - No distribution beyond personal use without permission* **2** They will have no inheritance in the midst of their fellow Israelites; the LORD alone is their inheritance, just as he had

told them. **3** This shall be the priests' fair allotment from the people who offer sacrifices, whether bull or sheep – they must give to the priest the shoulder, the jowls, and the stomach. **4** You must give them the best of your grain, new wine, and olive oil, as well as the best of your wool when you shear your flocks. **5** For the LORD

your God has chosen them and their sons from all your tribes to stand and serve in his name permanently. **6**

Suppose a Levite comes by his own free will from one of your villages, from any part of Israel where he is living, to the place the LORD chooses **7** and serves in the name of the LORD his God like his fellow Levites who stand there before the LORD. **8** He must eat the same share they do, despite any profits he may gain from the sale of his family's inheritance.

9 When you enter the land the LORD your God is giving you, you must not learn the abhorrent practices of those nations.

10 There must never be found among you anyone who sacrifices his son or daughter in the fire, anyone who practices divination, an omen reader, a soothsayer, a sorcerer, **11** one who casts spells, one who conjures up spirits, a practitioner of the occult, or a necromancer. **12**

Whoever does these things is abhorrent to the LORD and because of these detestable things the LORD your God is about to drive them out from before you. **13** You must be blameless before the LORD your God. **14** Those nations that you are about to dispossess listen to omen readers and diviners, but the LORD your God has not given you permission to do such things.

15 The LORD your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among you – from your fellow Israelites; you must listen to him. **16** This accords with what happened at Horeb in the day of the assembly. You asked the LORD

your God: "Please do not make us hear the voice of the LORD our God any more or see this great fire any more lest we die." **17** The LORD then said to me, "What they have said

is good. **18** I will raise up a prophet like you for them from among their fellow Israelites. I will put my words in his mouth and he will speak to them whatever I command. **19** I will personally hold responsible anyone who then pays no attention to the words that prophet speaks in my name.

20 “But if any prophet presumes to speak anything in my name that I have not authorized him to speak, or speaks in the name of other gods, that prophet must die.

21 Now if you say to yourselves, ‘How can we tell that a message is not from the LORD?’ – **22** whenever a prophet speaks in my name and the prediction is not fulfilled, then I have not spoken it; the prophet has presumed to speak it, so you need not fear him.”

1 When the LORD your God destroys the nations whose land he is about to give you and you dispossess them and settle in their cities and houses, Guzik - Deuteronomy 19:1-21

Deuteronomy 19 - Concerning Criminal Law

A. Cities of refuge to be provided.

1. (1-3) Three special cities.

When the LORD your God has cut off the nations whose land the LORD your God is giving you, and you dispossess them and dwell in their cities and in their houses, you shall separate three cities for yourself in the midst of your land which the LORD

your God is giving you to possess. You shall prepare roads for yourself, and divide into three parts the territory of your land which the LORD your God is giving you to inherit, that any manslayer may flee there.

a. **You shall separate three cities for yourself in the midst of the land:** God

instructed Israel to make three cities of refuge in the Promised Land, and instructed them to make them "centrally located" (**in the midst of the land**).

i. There are two other important passages dealing with the cities of refuge: Num. 35:9-

28 and Jos. 20:7-8; a full understanding of the purpose and practice of the cities of refuge must be based on all of these passages.

ii. Moses had already established Bezer, Ramoth, and Golan as the cities of refuge on the east side of the Jordan River (Deu. 4:41-43); this command is to establish three more cities of refuge on the west side of the Jordan.

b. **Prepare roads for yourself:** The people of Israel were to make good roads to each city of refuge, so the cities would be accessible.

i. "The Jews inform us that the roads to the cities of refuge were made very broad, thirty-two cubits; and even, so that there should be no impediments in the way; and were constantly kept in good repair." (Clarke)

2. (4-7) The purpose for the cities of refuge.

And this *is* the case of the manslayer who flees there, that he may live: Whoever kills his neighbor unintentionally, not having hated him in time past; as when *a man* goes to the woods with his neighbor to cut timber, and his hand swings a stroke with the ax to cut down the tree, and the head slips from the handle and strikes his neighbor so that he dies; he shall flee to one of these cities and live; lest the avenger of blood, while his anger is hot, pursue the manslayer and overtake him, because the way is long, and kill him, though he *was* not deserving of death, since he had not hated the victim in time past.

Therefore I command you, saying, "You shall separate three cities for yourself."

a. **The case of the manslayer who flees**

there, that he may live: The cities of refuge were for the protection of the person who killed another accidentally or

in self-defense. In ancient Israel, when one was killed, it was the responsibility of the **avenger of blood** to make certain the murder was punished.

i. This practice was based upon a correct understanding of Gen. 9:6: *Whoever shed's man's blood, by man his blood shall be shed; for in the image of God, God made man.*

b. **Lest the avenger of blood:** The **avenger of blood** was an appointed member of the family (the *goel*), designated to protect the honor and lives of the family. His interest would not be in gathering evidence, but in avenging the honor of the family - so, in the case of an accidental killing, the **manslayer** would need protection from the **avenger of blood**.

i. The case study given illustrates the point: Two men are working together, chopping down trees, when one man takes a swing of an ax and the ax head flies off, striking the other man in the head and instantly killing him. The surviving man had good reason to believe the avenger of blood from the dead man's family would track him down and kill him, believing the death was murder.

ii. Therefore, such a man could flee to a city of refuge - an appointed Levitical city, where he could stay, safe from the avenger of blood, until the issue was settled and he could leave the city of refuge safely.

3. (8-10) Appointment of additional cities of refuge.

Now if the LORD your God enlarges your territory, as He swore to your fathers, and gives you the land which He promised to give to your fathers, and if you keep all these commandments and do them, which I command you today, to love the LORD your God and to walk always in His ways, then you shall add three more cities for yourself besides these three, lest innocent blood be shed in the midst

of your land which the LORD
your God is giving you *as* an inheritance, and *thus* guilt of
bloodshed be upon you.

a. **Now if the LORD your God enlarges your**

territory: As Israel expanded, there were to be more cities
of refuge. If a city of refuge was too far to be readily reached
by the manslayer, it did him no good - the avenger of blood
would overtake him before he could reach the city of refuge.

b. **Then you shall add three more cities for yourself:**

Ultimately, there were to be six cities of refuge; with three
on each side of the Jordan River. Each of the three cities on
either side would be positioned as north, central, and south.

i. Jos. 20:7-8 tells of the actual cities

chosen; they fulfilled the plan of being
evenly distributed perfectly.

4. (11-13) What to do with the guilty who seeks protection in
the city of refuge: **your eye shall not pity him.**

But if anyone hates his neighbor, lies in wait for him, rises
against him and strikes him mortally, so that he dies, and he
flees to one of these cities, then the elders of his city shall
send and bring him from there, and deliver him over to the
hand of the avenger of blood, that he may die.

Your eye shall not pity him, but you shall put away *the guilt*
of innocent blood from Israel, that it may go well with you.

a. **But if anyone hates his neighbor, lies in wait for
him, rises against him and strikes him mortally:** We
can easily imagine that those truly guilty of murder would,
at some time or another, seek protection in the city of
refuge.

So, whenever a manslayer came to seek
protection at a city of refuge, **the elders of the city** were
to judge his case and determine if he was truly worthy of
protection.

b. **Deliver him over to the hand of the**

avenger of blood: If it was determined at this trial that the
man was really guilty of murder, then he would be delivered

to the hand of the avenger of blood, that he may die.

There was no protection of the guilty within the walls of a city of refuge.

c. Put away the guilt of innocent blood

from Israel, that it may go well with you: God was just as concerned that the *guilty* be punished as He was that the *innocent* be protected (*lest innocent blood be shed in the midst of your land*, Deu. 19:10).

5. The cities of refuge as a picture of Jesus.

a. The Bible applies this picture of the city of refuge to the believer finding refuge in God on more than one occasion: i. Psa. 46:1: *God is our refuge and strength, A very present help in trouble.* More than 15

other times, the Psalms speak of God as being our refuge.

ii. Heb. 6:18: *That by two immutable things, in which it is impossible for God to lie, we might have strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold of the hope set before us.*

b. Both Jesus and the cities of refuge are *within easy reach* of the needy person; they were of no use unless someone could get to the place of refuge.

c. Both Jesus and the cities of refuge are *open to all*, not just the Israelite; no one needs to fear that they would be turned away from their place of refuge in their time of need (Num. 35:15).

d. Both Jesus and the cities of refuge became a place where the one in need would *live*; you didn't come to a city of refuge in time of need just to look around (Num. 35:25).

e. Both Jesus and the cities of refuge are the *only alternative* for the one in need; without this specific protection, they will be destroyed.

f. Both Jesus and the cities of refuge provide protection *only within their boundaries*; to go outside meant death (Num. 35:26-28).

g. With both Jesus and the cities of refuge, full freedom comes with the *death of the High Priest* (Num. 35:25).

h. *A crucial distinction*: The cities of refuge only helped the *innocent*; the *guilty* can come to Jesus and find refuge!

B. Other legal principles.

1. (14) The principle of the landmark.

You shall not remove your neighbor's landmark, which the men of old have set, in your inheritance which you will inherit in the land that the LORD your God is giving you to possess.

a. **You shall not remove your neighbor's**

landmark: God here established and supported the basic right to private property. When your neighbor has a lawful landmark, you must respect it - and are forbidden to change it as you might please.

i. This command supports an important foundation for human society: The right to personal property. God has clearly entrusted certain possessions to certain individuals, and other people or states are not permitted to take that property without due process of law.

b. **Which the men of old have set**: This law also reflects an important spiritual principle: It isn't wise to ignore what the **men of old have set** when doing the work of the LORD. Many a young man, or a new man, has greatly hindered his own work by being a revolutionary - and ignoring the "landmarks" which the **men of old have set**.

2. (15-20) The principle of true and false witness.

One witness shall not rise against a man concerning any iniquity or any sin that he commits; by the mouth of two or three witnesses the matter shall be established. If a false witness rises against any man to testify against him of wrongdoing, then both men in the controversy shall stand before the LORD, before the priests and the judges who serve in those days. And the judges

shall make careful inquiry, and indeed, *if the witness is a false witness, who has testified falsely against his brother, then you shall do to him as he thought to have done to his brother; so you shall put away the evil from among you.*

And those who remain shall hear and fear, and hereafter they shall not again commit such evil among you.

a. **One witness shall not rise:** One witness was never enough to establish a fact in a Biblical court of law. One needed **two or three witness** to establish a matter.

i. This isn't just because it is possible for one witness to lie without having his story corroborated. It is because one witness can

be confused, or mistaken in his testimony. It

is a basic measure of reliability that it must be more than a simple case of "my word against theirs."

ii. Some have carried this principle to

modern courts by saying that two

independent lines of evidence can be valid

"witnesses." For example, if there were a murder which no one witnessed with their

eyes, yet there was a murder weapon with

clear fingerprints, and additional blood

evidence each pointing to one suspect, this

would be counted as two independent

"witnesses."

b. **If a false witness rises against any man to testify:**

False witness was discovered by careful examination (**the judges shall make diligent inquiry**) and was punished by giving the false witness the same penalty which would have gone to the man he falsely accused (**you shall do to him as he thought to have done to his brother**).

i. At the trial of Jesus, many false witnesses rose up against him, and were demonstrated to be false witnesses by their confused and

contradictory testimony (Mat. 26:59-60).

The false witnesses, under Jewish law,

should have been put to death, because that is the punishment they sought for Jesus.

c. And those who remain shall hear and

fear: Many modern people doubt that the punishment of others is an effective deterrent to crime; but the Bible clearly says that it is. Weak or inconsistent punishment does not deter crime, but effective punishment does.

3. (21) Eye for eye, tooth for tooth.

Your eye shall not pity: life *shall be* for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot.

a. **Your eye shall not pity:** This was an important principle for the Biblical court of law; here, connected to the punishment described for false witness, it shows that whatever evil was planned or practiced against another, a similar punishment should be brought against the false witness.

b. **Life shall be for life, eye for eye:** However, retribution was always limited by the **eye for eye** principle. This law was meant to be a check to our desire to revenge, not a license for revenge.

i. Our tendency is to want to do *more* to the offending party than what they have done to us. But we cannot punish from a motive of revenge, only from a motive of justice.

ii. "Far from encouraging vengeance it limits vengeance and stands as a guide for a judge as he fixes a penalty suited to the crime.

The principle was thus not license or vengeance, but a guarantee of justice." (Thompson)

c. **Eye for eye, tooth for tooth:** In Mat. 5:38-39, Jesus quoted this passage in His teaching on the true interpretation of the law. He does not say that the **eye for eye** principle is wrong; rather, He simply condemns the use of it to make it an *obligation* to exact revenge against someone who has *personally* offended me.

i. Many Rabbis in Jesus' day taught that the **eye for eye** law meant you were obligated to avenge yourself of a personal insult or attack brought against you. Jesus rightly

disallowed the application of this law in our personal relationships; it was a law intended to guide the judges in the law courts of Israel, not to guide our personal relationships.

ii. "Jesus' criticism of this law (Mat. 5:38f.) arose from its use to regulate conduct between individuals. He did not reject it as a principle of justice which should operate in the courts of the land. For private

relationships He proposed the ideal of brotherhood, a strong principle throughout the book of Deuteronomy. To extend the *lex talionis* to this interpersonal domain was to destroy the law of God."

(Thompson) © 2006 David Guzik - *No distribution beyond personal use without permission*

2 you must set apart for yourselves three cities in the middle of your land that the LORD your God is giving you as a possession. **3** You shall build a roadway and divide into thirds the whole extent of your land that the LORD

your God is providing as your inheritance; anyone who kills another person should flee to the closest of these cities. **4**

Now this is the law pertaining to one who flees there in order to live, if he has accidentally killed another without hating him at the time of the accident. **5** Suppose he goes with someone else to the forest to cut wood and when he raises the ax to cut the tree, the ax head flies loose from the handle and strikes his fellow worker so hard that he dies. The person responsible may then flee to one of these cities to save himself. **6** Otherwise the blood avenger will chase after the killer in the heat of his anger, eventually overtake him, and kill him, though this is not a capital case since he did not hate him at the time of the accident. **7**

Therefore, I am commanding you to set apart for yourselves three cities. **8** If the LORD your God enlarges your borders as he promised your ancestors and gives you all the land he pledged to them, **9** and then you are careful to observe all these commandments I am giving you today (namely, to love the LORD your God and to always walk in his ways), then you must add three more cities to these three. **10** You must not shed innocent blood in your land that the LORD your God is giving you as an inheritance, for that would make you guilty. **11** However, suppose a person hates someone else and stalks him, attacks him, kills him, and then flees to one of these cities. **12** The elders of his own city must send for him and remove him from there to deliver him over to the blood avenger to die.

13 You must not pity him, but purge out the blood of the innocent from Israel, so that it may go well with you.

14 You must not encroach on your neighbor's property, which will have been defined in the inheritance you will obtain in the land the LORD your God is giving you.

15 A single witness may not testify against another person for any trespass or sin that he commits. A matter may be legally established only on the testimony of two or three witnesses. **16** If a false witness testifies against another person and accuses him of a crime, **17** then both parties to the controversy must stand before the LORD, that is, before the priests and judges who will be in office in those days. **18** The judges will thoroughly investigate the matter, and if the witness should prove to be false and to have given false testimony against the accused, **19** you must do to him what he had intended to do to the accused. In this way you will purge evil from among you.

20 The rest of the people will hear and become afraid to keep doing such evil among you. **21** You must not show pity; the principle will be a life for a life, an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth, a hand for a hand, and a foot for a foot.

1 When you go to war against your enemies and see chariotry and troops who outnumber you, do not be afraid of them, for the LORD your God, who brought you up out of the land of Egypt, is with you.

Guzik - Deuteronomy 20:1-20

Deuteronomy 20 - Instructions Concerning

Warfare

A. The spiritual and practical preparation of the army.

1. (1) The command to trust in God.

When you go out to battle against your enemies, and see horses and chariots *and* people more numerous than you, do not be afraid of them; for the LORD your God *is* with you, who brought you up from the land of Egypt.

a. **When you go out to battle against your enemies, and see horses and chariots and**

people more numerous than you: Israel, a small nation surrounded by great empires, was rarely in a strategically superior position. In battle, they usually saw **horses and chariots and people more numerous than you.**

b. **Do not be afraid of them:** Despite the clear danger, they also had a clear command from God to not fear. Israel was commanded to

not fear what any logical military man *would* fear: superior numbers, superior technology, and superior equipment.

c. **For the LORD your God is with you:** Yet, Israel was given a *reason* to not fear. God did not deny that the enemies of Israel would usually have more horses, chariots, and people than Israel. But God asked them to recognize a greater fact: That **the LORD your God is with you.**

i. As Paul said it in Rom. 8:31: *If God is for us, who can be against us?* One with God makes an unbeatable majority.

d. **Who brought you up from the land of**

Egypt: Israel was also given *evidence* for faith.

God didn't ask Israel to have a "blind" trust in Him. They could trust Him as they went into battle because He had proven Himself mighty

and faithful before. He had a track record which could be trusted.

2. (2-4) The command to encourage people before battle.

So it shall be, when you are on the verge of battle, that the priest shall approach and speak to the people. And he shall say to them, "Hear, O Israel: Today you are on the verge of battle with your enemies. Do not let your heart faint, do not be afraid, and do not tremble or be terrified because of them; for the LORD your God *is* He who goes with you, to fight for you against your enemies, to save you."

a. **When you are on the verge of battle:** At this critical time, it was the job of the **priest** to encourage the soldiers to trust in God. Though the priests were not normally to go into battle themselves (they were not numbered among the fighting men of Israel, Num. 1:47-53), the priests still had an important job when Israel went to war - to spiritually teach and encourage the soldiers!

b. **The LORD your God is He who goes with you, to fight for you against your enemies, to save you:** This was the reason for courage.

When Israel was obedient, and trusting in God, they could never lose. But when they were disobedient, or not trusting, they could never win - even if they had superior forces.

3. (5-9) How to shrink an army, and make it more effective.

Then the officers shall speak to the people, saying: "What man *is there* who has built a new house and has not dedicated it? Let him go and return to his house, lest he die in the battle and another man dedicate it. Also what man *is there* who has planted a vineyard and has not eaten of it? Let him go and return to his house, lest he die in the battle and another man eat of it. And what man *is there* who is betrothed to a woman and has not married her? Let him go and return to his house, lest he die in the battle and another man marry her." The officers shall speak further to the people, and say, "What man *is there who is* fearful and fainthearted? Let him go and return to his house, lest the heart of his brethren faint like his heart." And so it shall be,

when the officers have finished speaking to the people, that they shall make captains of the armies to lead the people.

a. **What man is there who has built a new house and has not dedicated it?** God first told the officers of the army of Israel to send home all the soldiers who had unfinished business at home: a home he has not used, a

vineyard he has not harvested, or an engaged woman he has not married - let them go home.

b. **What man is there who is fearful and fainthearted?** Next, the officers of Israel were to send home all who were **fearful and fainthearted**. They might just make the others fearful also! In the spiritual army of God, He only wants willing, brave soldiers.

c. **When the officers have finished speaking to the people:** God was perfectly willing to use those who were left after the officers had excused all of those under the

previous two conditions. Both of these exemptions - remarkable among any army - were a powerful testimony that Israel trusted in God for military victory, not in their own ability to raise a mighty, large army.

i. To God, the *size* of the army wasn't important; the *heart* of the army was far more important. He didn't want people who might be distracted from the real battle by worrying about the cares of everyday life (their home, their vineyard, their fiancée'); nor did He want people who were not really trusting Him. God could do more through a *smaller* army that was really committed to Him than through a *bigger* army that was full of compromise.

ii. The story of Gideon (Judges 7) is a powerful illustration of this; Gideon started with an army of 32,000, but it was too big - so he sent home those who were afraid, and

22,000 left! But it was still too big, so God had him send home 7,700 more, so he only had an army of 300 to fight against a Midianite army of 135,000! Yet God gave him the victory.

d. Make captains of the armies to lead the

people: God commanded that His army have leadership. No matter how good the soldiers were, they needed to have good leadership.

B. Instructions for battle.

It is important to note that God gave instructions to Israel on how to conduct war. There are, in God's way of doing things, rules for war. It cannot be conducted in any way conceivable or in any way that might bring victory. These principles are reflected in the ancient Christian teachings regarding just war.

1. (10-11) The offer of peace.

When you go near a city to fight against it, then proclaim an offer of peace to it. And it shall be that if they accept your offer of peace, and open to you, then all the people *who are* found in it shall be placed under tribute to you, and serve you.

a. **When you go near a city to fight against it:** The following verses describe the normal battle procedures for Israel. There were many times when God gave specific instructions which would supersede these normal instructions, such as with the battle of Jericho or the conquest of Canaan in general.

b. **Proclaim an offer of peace:** It was important that Israel did not fight unnecessarily.

If the city would agree to terms of peace, then they should come to an agreement.

c. **It shall be placed under tribute to you:** The conquered city would be made a tribute city to Israel, subservient to the nation of Israel.

2. (12-15) Conquering a city through siege and battle.

Now if *the city* will not make peace with you, but makes war against you, then you shall besiege it.

And when the LORD your God delivers it into your hands, you shall strike every male in it with the edge of the sword. But the women, the little ones, the livestock, and all that is in the city, all its spoil, you shall plunder for yourself; and you shall eat the enemies' plunder which the LORD

your God gives you. Thus you shall do to all the cities *which are* very far from you, which *are* not of the cities of these nations.

a. **You shall besiege it:** Typically, a walled city was conquered by use of the *siege*. Enemy armies surrounded a city and cut off all their supplies and contact with the outside world.

When the city was sufficiently weakened through hunger or thirst, they either surrendered or were conquered. Sometimes a siege would last for years.

i. There are a few horrific sieges described in the Scriptures, such as a siege of Samaria in 2Ki. 6:24-33.

b. **You shall strike every male:** It was simply understood in the ancient world that any surviving male would be a perpetual enemy of the people who had conquered his city.

Prisoners of war were often not taken in ancient warfare; enemies were simply killed.

c. **You shall plunder for yourself:** Plunder provided the wages for the army in ancient warfare, and underwrote the expenses for the battle.

3. (16-18) The command to utterly destroy the Canaanites.

But of the cities of these peoples which the LORD your God gives you *as* an inheritance, you shall let nothing that breathes remain alive, but you shall utterly destroy

them: the Hittite and the Amorite and the Canaanite and the Perizzite and the Hivite and the Jebusite, just as the LORD your God has commanded you, lest they teach you to do according to all their abominations which they have done for their gods, and you sin against the LORD your God.

a. You shall let nothing that breathes

remain: The previous commands regarding warfare did not apply to the upcoming conquest of Canaan. There, not only was Israel not to offer peace to the cities, but they were also to destroy everything, not only the adult males.

This was a unique war of judgment, more than a war of conquest or defense.

b. Lest they teach you to do according to their abominations which they have done

for their gods: This explains why such a complete destruction was commanded. The culture of the Canaanites was so corrupt -

socially, morally, and spiritually - that God considered it irredeemable, and ripe for judgment. In this unique war, the armies of Israel were to bring that judgment upon the Canaanites.

4. (19-20) The command to save trees for food during a siege.

When you besiege a city for a long time, while making war against it to take it, you shall not destroy its trees by wielding an ax against them; if you can eat of them, do not cut them down to use in the siege, for the tree of the field *is* man's *food*. Only the trees which you know *are* not trees for food you may destroy and cut down, to build siegeworks against the city that makes war with you, until it is subdued.

a. When you besiege a city for a long time: When an army surrounded a city during a siege, the army would forage around the countryside for supplies. Needing wood

for building and fuel, it would be common for the besieging army to cut down trees in the area around the city.

b. Only the trees which you know are not trees for food you may destroy and cut

down: However, God commanded Israel

against cutting down **trees for food** when they besieged a city. They had to take a long-term view (one good for the ecology), and see that

their immediate need for wood was less

important than the long-term good of the area.

© 2006 David Guzik - No distribution beyond personal use without permission **2** As you move forward for battle, the priest will approach and say to the soldiers, **3** “Listen, Israel! Today you are moving forward to do battle with your enemies.

Do not be fainthearted. Do not fear and tremble or be terrified because of them, **4** for the LORD your God goes with you to fight on your behalf against your enemies to give you victory.” **5** Moreover, the officers are to say to the troops, “Who among you has built a new house and not dedicated it? He may go home, lest he die in battle and someone else dedicate it. **6** Or who among you has planted a vineyard and not benefited from it? He may go home, lest he die in battle and someone else benefit from it. **7** Or who among you has become engaged to a woman but has not married her? He may go home, lest he die in battle and someone else marry her.” **8** In addition, the officers are to say to the troops, “Who among you is afraid and fainthearted? He may go home so that he will not make his fellow soldier’s heart as fearful as his own.” **9**

Then, when the officers have finished speaking, they must appoint unit commanders to lead the troops.

10 When you approach a city to wage war against it, offer it terms of peace. **11** If it accepts your terms and submits to you, all the people found in it will become your slaves. **12** If

it does not accept terms of peace but makes war with you, then you are to lay siege to it. **13** The LORD your God will deliver it over to you and you must kill every single male by the sword. **14** However, the women, little children, cattle, and anything else in the city – all its plunder – you may take for yourselves as spoil. You may take from your enemies the plunder that the LORD your God has given you. **15** This is how you are to deal with all those cities located far from you, those that do not belong to these nearby nations.

16 As for the cities of these peoples that the LORD your God is going to give you as an inheritance, you must not allow a single living thing to survive. **17** Instead you must utterly annihilate them – the Hittites, Amorites, Canaanites, Perizzites, Hivites, and Jebusites – just as the LORD your God has commanded you, **18** so that they cannot teach you all the abhorrent ways they worship their gods, causing you to sin against the LORD your God. **19** If you besiege a city for a long time while attempting to capture it, you must not chop down its trees, for you may eat fruit from them and should not cut them down. A tree in the field is not human that you should besiege it! **20**

However, you may chop down any tree you know is not suitable for food, and you may use it to build siege works against the city that is making war with you until that city falls.

1 If a homicide victim should be found lying in a field in the land the LORD your God is giving you, and no one knows who killed him, Guzik - Deuteronomy 21:1-23

Deuteronomy 21 - Various Laws

A. The law of an unsolved murders.

1. (1) The presence of an unsolved murder.

If *anyone* is found slain, lying in the field in the land which the LORD your God is giving you to possess, *and* it is not known who killed him, a. **If anyone is found slain:**

Presumably, death from natural causes had been ruled out and it was evident that the deceased had been murdered; yet, it was **not known who killed him**.

b. **It is not known who killed him:** This was important based on a principle stated in Num.

35:33-34. This passage shows that the blood of unsolved, unavenged murder defiles and pollutes the land. Therefore, if there is a murder unavenged, some kind of cleansing is necessary, so the land will not be defiled.

2. (2-6) The procedure for atoning for murder-polluted land.

Then your elders and your judges shall go out and measure *the distance* from the slain man to the surrounding cities. And it shall be *that* the elders of the city nearest to the slain man will take a heifer which has not been worked *and* which has not pulled with a yoke. The elders of that city shall bring the heifer down to a valley with flowing water, which is neither plowed nor sown, and they shall break the heifer's neck there in the valley. Then the priests, the sons of Levi, shall come near, for the LORD your God has chosen them to minister to Him and to bless in the name of the LORD; by their word every controversy and every assault shall be *settled*.

And all the elders of that city nearest to the slain *man* shall wash their hands over the heifer whose neck was broken in the valley.

a. **The elders of the city nearest to the**

slain man: First, the matter of jurisdiction had to be settled. These **elders** were responsible to make the sacrifice to atone for and cleanse the murder-polluted land.

b. **A heifer which has not been worked:**

Then, appropriate sacrifice had to be made.

This **heifer** was sacrificed by the **sons of Levi** in the presence of the city elders, who washed their hands over the

sacrificed animal.

i. This washing of the hands, done in the presence of the **sons of Levi**, who **by their word every controversy and every assault shall be settled**, was a powerful proclamation by the elders: "We have done all we could to settle this case, but cannot.

We are clean from all guilt in the matter of this slain man."

ii. Of course, this *ceremony* of washing the hands over the sacrificed animal meant nothing if the elders had in fact *not* done what they could to avenge the murder; apart from that, this washing of the hands

was just as much an empty gesture as Pilate's washing of his hands at the trial of Jesus (Mat. 27:24).

3. (7-9) The prayer said by the elders as they washed their hands.

Then they shall answer and say, "Our hands have not shed this blood, nor have our eyes seen *it*."

Provide atonement, O LORD, for Your people Israel, whom You have redeemed, and do not lay innocent blood to the charge of Your people Israel." And atonement shall be provided on their behalf for the blood. So you shall put away the *guilt of* innocent blood from among you when you do *what is* right in the sight of the LORD.

a. **Provide atonement, O LORD:** Again, Num.

35:33-34 makes the principle clear, that unavenged murders defile and pollute the land and atonement must be made for the land itself.

b. **So you shall put away the guilt of innocent blood:** When Israel followed God's instructions for atonement, He honored His word by taking away their guilt. But the removal of guilt was always based on blood sacrifice, on a substitutionary atonement - looking forward to the work of Jesus on the cross for the entire world.

B. Laws relevant to family and home situations.

1. (10-14) Laws regarding the taking of a wife from conquered peoples.

When you go out to war against your enemies, and the LORD your God delivers them into your hand, and you take them captive, and you see among the captives a beautiful woman, and desire her and would take her for your wife, then you shall bring her home to your house, and she shall shave her head and trim her nails. She shall put off the clothes of her captivity, remain in your house, and mourn her father and her mother a full month; after that you may go in to her and be her husband, and she shall be your wife. And it shall be, if you have no delight in her, then you shall set her free, but you certainly shall not sell her for money; you shall not treat her brutally, because you have humbled her.

a. **And you see among the captives a beautiful woman, and desire her:** In the ancient world, it was not uncommon for a man to take a wife from **among the captives**, especially if she was **a beautiful woman**. Yet obviously, this was open to great abuse, so God give specific guidelines to govern this practice in Israel.

b. **Shave her head and trim her nails:** First, the captive woman had to be *purified and humbled*. This denoted a complete break with her past, and the willingness to start anew, humbly as a child.

c. **Put off the clothes of her captivity, remain in your house:** Second, the captive woman had to show a *change of allegiance*.

This showed that the captive woman no longer regarded her former nation and her former family; now she was a citizen of Israel.

d. **Mourn her father and mother a full month:** Third, the captive woman had to *mourn her past associations*. This would be time when she could resolve issues in her heart regarding her family, and when her husband-to-

he could live with her a month without intimate relations - so he could see if he really wanted to take this woman as a wife, and to make sure he was not making a decision based only of physical appearance or attractiveness.

e. You certainly shall not sell her for

money; you shall not treat her brutally: After the month of mourning, the potential husband was free to marry the captive woman -

yet, he did not have to. But if he decided not to, he had to set her free with dignity. This was a remarkable protection of the rights of a captive woman.

2. (15-17) The protection of inheritance rights.

If a man has two wives, one loved and the other unloved, and they have borne him children, *both* the loved and the unloved, and *if* the firstborn son is of her who is unloved, then it shall be, on the day he bequeaths his possessions to his sons, *that* he must not bestow firstborn status on the son of the loved wife in preference to the son of the unloved, the *true* firstborn. But he shall acknowledge the son of the unloved wife *as* the firstborn by giving him a double portion of all that he has, for he *is* the beginning of his strength; the right of the firstborn *is* his.

a. **If a man has two wives:** Obviously, there are going to be problems in a home like this, especially if there is **one loved and the other unloved**. Yet, God commanded that the inheritance rights of the firstborn son be respected, even if he were the son of the **unloved** wife.

b. **A double portion of all that he has:** This was the **right of the firstborn** in ancient Israel; the firstborn son was to receive twice as much inheritance as any other son. For example, if there were three sons, the inheritance would be divided into four parts, with the firstborn receiving two parts, and the other three sons each receiving one part.

3. (18-21) The penalty for a rebellious son.

If a man has a stubborn and rebellious son who will not obey the voice of his father or the voice of his mother, and *who*, when they have chastened him, will not heed them, then his father and his mother shall take hold of him and bring him out to the elders of his city, to the gate of his city. And they shall say to the elders of his city, "This son of ours is stubborn and rebellious; he will not obey our voice; he is a glutton and a drunkard." Then all the men of his city shall stone him to death with stones; so you shall put away the evil from among you, and all Israel shall hear and fear.

a. **A stubborn and rebellious son:** This does not mean a small child, or even a young teen - but a son past the age of accountability, who sets himself in determined rebellion against his father and mother.

b. **Who, when they have chastened him, will not heed them:** The parents must have done a good job raising the son, calling him to obedience, and chastening him as appropriate before the LORD.

c. **Bring him out to the elders of his city:** Such a *stubborn and rebellious son* was to be put on trial before the elders of the city. If they determine him to be chronically rebellious, then the son was to be stoned to death.

i. It is important to note that the parents could not, by themselves, execute this penalty. They had to bring the son on trial before impartial judges. This is in contrast to ancient Greek and Roman law, which gave fathers the absolute right of life or death

over their children. This was a *control* of parental authority more than it was an *exercise* of it.

ii. The parents had to take the boy to the elders of the community; not only because the decision of life or death should be taken out of their direct hands, but because the

guilt of the *stubborn and rebellious son* was not only against his parents, but against the whole community. He sowed the seeds for

cultural suicide in Israel.

d. **And all Israel shall hear and fear:** This law was clearly intended to protect the social order of ancient Israel. No society can endure when the young are allowed to make war against the old.

i. Perhaps just the presence of this law was deterrent enough; we never have a Scriptural example of a son being stoned to death because he was a *stubborn and rebellious son*.

ii. "Yet the Jews say this law was never put into practice, and therefore it might be made for terror and prevention, and to render the

authority of parents more sacred and powerful." (Poole)

iii. "Stoning was the punishment appointed for blasphemers and idolaters; which if it

seem severe, it is to be considered that parents are in God's stead, and intrusted in good measure with his authority over their children; and that families are the matter and foundation of the church and commonwealth, and they who are naughty members and rebellious children in them, do commonly prove the bane and plague of these, and therefore no wonder if they are nipped in the bud." (Poole)

iv. "If such a law were in force now, and duly executed, how many deaths of

disobedient and profligate children would there be in all corners of the land!" (Clarke) 4. (22-23) The curse upon one who hangs on a tree.

If a man has committed a sin deserving of death, and he is put to death, and you hang him on a tree, his body shall not remain overnight on the tree, but you shall surely bury him that day, so that you do not defile the land which the LORD your God is giving you as an inheritance; for he who is hanged *is* accursed of God.

a. **And you hang him on a tree:** In the thinking of ancient Israel there was something worse than being put to death. Worse than that was to be put to death and to have your corpse left exposed to shame, humiliation, and scavenging animals and birds.

i. **Hang him on a tree** does not have the idea of being executed by strangulation; but of having the corpse mounted on a tree or other prominent place, to expose the executed one to disgrace and the elements.

b. **His body shall not remain overnight on the tree, but you shall surely bury him**

that day: Therefore, if anyone was executed and deemed worthy of such disgrace (**and you hang him on a tree**), the humiliation to his memory and his family must not be excessive.

This was a way of tempering even the most severe judgment with mercy.

i. "It is worthy of remark that in the infliction of punishment prescribed by the Mosaic law, we ever find that *Mercy* walks hand in hand with *Judgment*." (Clarke) c. **For he who is hanged is accursed of**

God: The punishment of being hanged on a tree, and left to open exposure, was thought to be so severe, that it was reserved only for those for which it was to be declared: "this one is **accursed of God**."

i. Paul expounds on Deu. 21:23 in Gal. 3:13-14: *Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, having become a curse for us*

(for it is written, "Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree"), that the blessing of Abraham might come upon the Gentiles in Christ Jesus, that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith. Jesus not only died in our place; but He also took the place as the **accursed of God**, being hung on a "tree" in open shame and degradation.

He received this curse, which we deserved and He did not, so that we could receive the *blessing of Abraham*, which He deserved and we did not.

ii. We are *redeemed from the curse of the law* by the work of Jesus on the cross for us.

We no longer have to fear that God wants to curse us; He wants to *bless* us, not because of who we are, or what we have done, but because of what Jesus Christ has done on our behalf.

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2 your elders and judges must go out and measure how far it is to the cities in the vicinity of the corpse. **3** Then the elders of the city nearest to the corpse must take from the herd a heifer that has not been worked – that has never pulled with the yoke – **4** and bring the heifer down to a wadi with flowing water, to a valley that is neither plowed nor sown. There at the wadi they are to break the heifer's neck. **5** Then the Levitical priests will approach (for the LORD your God has chosen them to serve him and to pronounce blessings in his name, and to decide every judicial verdict) **6** and all the elders of that city nearest the corpse must wash their hands over the heifer whose neck was broken in the valley. **7** Then they must proclaim, "Our hands have not spilled this blood, nor have we witnessed the crime. **8** Do not blame your people Israel whom you redeemed, O LORD, and do not hold them accountable for the bloodshed of an innocent person." Then atonement will be made for the bloodshed. **9** In this manner you will purge

out the guilt of innocent blood from among you, for you must do what is right before the LORD.

10 When you go out to do battle with your enemies and the LORD your God allows you to prevail and you take prisoners,

11 if you should see among them an attractive woman whom you wish to take as a wife, **12** you may bring her back to your house. She must shave her head, trim her nails, **13** discard the clothing she was wearing when captured, and stay in your house, lamenting for her father and mother for a full month. After that you may have sexual relations with her and become her husband and she your wife. **14** If you are not pleased with her, then you must let her go where she pleases. You cannot in any case sell her; you must not take advantage of her, since you have already humiliated her.

15 Suppose a man has two wives, one whom he loves more than the other, and they both bear him sons, with the firstborn being the child of the less loved wife. **16** In the day he divides his inheritance he must not appoint as firstborn the son of the favorite wife in place of the other wife's son who is actually the firstborn. **17** Rather, he must acknowledge the son of the less loved wife as firstborn and give him the double portion of all he has, for that son is the beginning of his father's procreative power – to him should go the right of the firstborn.

18 If a person has a stubborn, rebellious son who pays no attention to his father or mother, and they discipline him to no avail, **19** his father and mother must seize him and bring him to the elders at the gate of his city. **20** They must declare to the elders of his city, "Our son is stubborn and rebellious and pays no attention to what we say – he is a glutton and drunkard." **21** Then all the men of his city must stone him to death. In this way you will purge out wickedness from among you, and all Israel will hear about it and be afraid.

22 If a person commits a sin punishable by death and is executed, and you hang the corpse on a tree, **23** his body

must not remain all night on the tree; instead you must make certain you bury him that same day, for the one who is left exposed on a tree is cursed by God. You must not defile your land which the LORD your God is giving you as an inheritance.

1 When you see your neighbor's ox or sheep going astray, do not ignore it; you must return it without fail to your neighbor.

Guzik - Deuteronomy 22:1-30

Deuteronomy 22 - Various Laws

A. Laws to demonstrate kindness and purity.

1. (1-4) Kindness to your brother regarding his animals.

You shall not see your brother's ox or his sheep going astray, and hide yourself from them; you shall certainly bring them back to your brother.

And if your brother *is* not near you, or if you do not know him, then you shall bring it to your own house, and it shall remain with you until your brother seeks it; then you shall restore it to him.

You shall do the same with his donkey, and so shall you do with his garment; with any lost thing of your brother's, which he has lost and you have found, you shall do likewise; you must not hide yourself. You shall not see your brother's donkey or his ox fall down along the road, and hide yourself from them; you shall surely help him lift *them* up again.

a. **You shall not see . . . and hide yourself:** God here condemned the sin of doing *nothing*.

To see your brother in need, and to do nothing, is to do evil. When one has the opportunity to good, **you must not hide yourself**.

b. **Until your brother seeks it; then you shall restore it to him:** Simply put, when something is lost, a finder cannot claim it as theirs without taking all due diligence to restore it to the owner. If the owner seeks the missing object, it must be restored to him.

i. Exo. 23:4-5 commands Israel to also help stray animals, but extends the obligation to the stray animals of an *enemy*, not just a brother.

c. You shall surely help him left them up

again: Also, if someone's donkey falls down, and you can help them, then you must. To pass by your brother in need and to **hide yourself from them** is to sin against your brother and against God.

2. (5) A command to keep distinction between the sexes in clothing.

A woman shall not wear anything that pertains to a man, nor shall a man put on a woman's garment, for all who do so *are* an abomination to the LORD your God.

a. **Anything that pertains to a man:** In Old Testament times, men and women wore clothing that was superficially similar - long robes and wrapping garments were common for both sexes. Yet, the specific types of garments and the way in which they were worn made a clear distinction between the sexes, and this command instructs God's people to respect those distinctions.

i. Some have taken this command to be the "proof-text" against women wearing pants and some Christian groups command that women wear only dresses. Yet, this is not a command against women wearing a garment that in some ways might be common between men and women; it is a command against dressing in a manner which deliberately blurs the lines between the sexes.

b. Nor shall a man put on a woman's

garment: This does not prohibit a man from wearing a kilt; yet it clearly prohibits a man dressing like a woman, as is all too common -

and all too accepted - in our modern culture.

i. The dramatic rise in cross-dressing, transvestitism, androgynous behavior, and "gender-bender" behavior in our culture is a shocking trampling of this command, and will reap a bitter harvest in more perversion and more gender confusion in our culture.

c. **All who do so are an abomination to the**

LORD your God: This command to observe the distinction between the sexes is so important, those who fail to observe it are called **an abomination to the LORD**. This was not only because cross-dressing was a feature of pagan, idolatrous worship in the ancient world, but also because of the terrible cultural price that is paid when it is pretended that there is no difference between men and women.

i. "Later writers, such as Lucian of Samosata and Eusebius, speak of the practice of masquerading in the worship of Astarte.

Apparently women appeared in men's garments and men in women's garments." (Thompson)

3. (6-7) A command to show kindness to animals.

If a bird's nest happens to be before you along the way, in any tree or on the ground, with young ones or eggs, with the mother sitting on the young or on the eggs, you shall not take the mother with the young; you shall surely let the mother go, and take the young for yourself, that it may be well with you and *that* you may prolong *your* days.

a. **If a bird's nest happens to be before you along the way:** God simply and plainly commanded kindness to animals. Even **a bird's nest** was to be given special consideration and care.

i. Some Jewish commentators say that this is the smallest, or least of all the commandments; yet even it has a promise of blessing for the obedient attached to it:

That it may be well with you and that

you may prolong your days.

b. You shall surely let the mother go:

Puritan commentator Matthew Poole wrote on this, "Partly for the bird's sake, which suffered enough by the loss of its young; for God would not have cruelty exercised towards the brute creatures; and partly for men's sake, to restrain their greediness and covetousness, that they should not monopolize all to themselves, but might leave the hopes of a future seed for others."

c. That it may be well with you and that

you may prolong your days. If Israel would obey this commandment, they would find blessing and long life, both as individuals and as a nation. What possible connection can there be between showing kindness to bird's nests and eggs and little baby birds and national survival?

i. First, because obedience to the smallest of God's commands brings blessing. It puts us into a properly submissive relationship to

Him, that this always brings blessing to us.

ii. Second, because kindness and gentleness in the small things often (but not always)

speaks to our ability to be kind and gentle in weightier matters. If someone is cruel to animals, not only is that sin in itself, but they are also much more likely to be cruel to people. If Israel allowed such cruelty to flourish, it would harm the nation.

4. (8) Liability and building codes.

When you build a new house, then you shall make a parapet for your roof, that you may not bring guilt of bloodshed on your household if anyone falls from it.

a. You shall make a parapet for your roof: God commanded that a railing be made for the rooftop, so someone were protected against falling.

b. That you may not bring bloodguiltiness

on your house: Failure to build in a safe way would bring guilt (liability) on the owner or builder of the home. They were responsible for the safety of those who would use the home.

i. In his sermon on Deu. 22:8, titled "Battlements," Charles Spurgeon shows how just as there was to be a railing for the protection of people on the roofs of Israel's homes, there are also spiritual railings for our protection. Many people, in regard to sin, get too close to the edge and fall off. Then it's too late! We need to have "railings" protecting us from the edge. Such railings will not only protect us, but others also.

5. (9-12) Four laws of separation.

You shall not sow your vineyard with different kinds of seed, lest the yield of the seed which you have sown and the fruit of your vineyard be defiled. You shall not plow with an ox and a donkey together. You shall not wear a garment of different sorts, *such as* wool and linen mixed together. You shall make tassels on the four corners of the clothing with which you cover *yourself*.

a. **You shall not sow your vineyard with different kinds of seed:** Each of these laws was meant to separate Israel from her pagan neighbors, who would commonly combine unlike things to achieve what was thought to be a "magical" combination.

b. **You shall not plow with an ox and a donkey together:** So, in pagan cultures it was common to combine **different kinds of seed** in a **vineyard**; or to **plow with an ox and a donkey together**; or to wear a garment of **wool and linen mixed together**. When God commands Israel to *not* do these things, it isn't so much for

the sake of the combinations themselves, but so Israel would not imitate the pagan, occultic customs of their neighbors.

i. There is a spiritual application of this principle; the commands forbidding unholy combinations, "though in themselves small and trivial, are given . . . to forbid all mixture of their inventions with God's institutions, in doctrine or worship." (Poole) ii. As Paul says, *Do not be unequally yoked together with unbelievers. For what fellowship has righteousness with lawlessness? And what communion has light with darkness?* (2Co. 6:14)

iii. One commentator believes that these laws were also given, in part, to protect other animals from the bad breath of donkeys: "Besides, the donkey, from feeding on coarse and poisonous weed, has a fetid breath, which its yoke-fellow seeks to avoid, not only as poisonous and offensive, but producing leanness, or, if long continued, death." (Jameison-Fauset-Brown, page 673) c. **You shall make tassels on the four corners of the clothing:** This command was also to distinguish Israel from their pagan neighbors; in this way, an Israelite man was immediately known by the clothes he wore.

i. i. "A symbolic meaning is given to these tassels in Num. 15:37-41, namely that they are a reminder to Israel to keep God's law." (Thompson)

ii. Like most good commands of God, men have the capability to twist and corrupt this command. In Jesus' day, He had to condemn the Pharisees in Mat. 23:5, saying they *enlarge the borders of their garments*. In other words, they made the tasseled portion of their garments larger and more prominent to show how spiritual they were.

B. Laws of sexual morality.

1. (13-21) Resolving an accusation of marital deception.

If any man takes a wife, and goes in to her, and detests her, and charges her with shameful conduct, and brings a bad name on her, and

says, "I took this woman, and when I came to her I found she *was* not a virgin," then the father and mother of the young woman shall take and bring out *the evidence of* the young woman's virginity to the elders of the city at the gate. And the young woman's father shall say to the elders, "I gave my daughter to this man as wife, and he detests her. Now he has charged her with shameful conduct, saying, 'I found your daughter *was* not a virgin,' and yet these *are the evidences of* my daughter's virginity." And they shall spread the cloth before the elders of the city. Then the elders of that city shall take that man and punish him; and they shall fine him one hundred *shekels* of silver and give *them* to the father of the young woman, because he has brought a bad name on a virgin of Israel. And

she shall be his wife; he cannot divorce her all his days. But if the thing is true, *and evidences of* virginity are not found for the young woman, then they shall bring out the young woman to the door of her father's house, and the men of her city shall stone her to death with stones, because she has done a disgraceful thing in Israel, to play the harlot in her father's house. So you shall put away the evil from among you.

a. **Charges her with shameful conduct:** The idea is that the man accused his wife of not being a virgin when they were married.

Apparently, this was discovered on their wedding night, when they first had intimate relations (**when I came into her I found she was not a virgin**).

i. It is important to understand that in

ancient Israel virginity was valued. It was seen as a great *loss* to give up one's virginity before marriage, and if a woman was known to have lost her virginity, it *greatly* reduced her chances of getting married.

ii. By the same principle, if a husband believed that his wife had lied about her virginity, he felt cheated. What follows is an attempt to resolve the issue.

b. Then the father and mother . . . bring out the evidence of the young woman's virginity . . . they shall spread the cloth before the elders of the city: according to custom, a Jewish woman would first be intimate with her husband upon a special cloth, which would collect the small drops of blood which were accepted as **evidence of the young woman's virginity**. This blood-stained cloth would then become the property of the married woman's parents, who kept it as the **evidence of the young woman's virginity**.

i. Many people argue that this custom of proving a woman's virginity is absurd, because it doesn't always work. Some have answered by saying it does "work" when ladies are given in marriage at twelve or thirteen years of age, as was the custom in Old Testament times.

ii. Nonetheless, for whatever reasons, the custom did "work" - and is still practiced in some parts of the world. "The proofs of virginity, the blood-spotted bedclothes or garments, which, though not infallible, were widely accepted in the ancient Near East as indications of prior virginity, are still accepted among some peoples today" (Kalland). Clarke also adds: "A custom similar to that above is observed among the Mohamedans to the present

day."

iii. Clarke on **they shall spread the cloth**:

"A usage of this kind argues a roughness of manners which would ill comport with the refinement of European ideas on so delicate a subject."

c. **The elders of the city shall take that**

man and punish him: If the parents could produce the evidence, then the man was found to have made false accusation against his wife and it was commanded that with a fine to be paid to the father of his bride.

i. Additionally, the man had forfeited his future right to divorce this wife: **he cannot divorce her all his days**.

ii. The strong penalty against a man who made a false accusation (**one hundred shekels of silver** was a significant fine), and the loss of his right to divorce his wife in the future was an effective deterrent against wild, false accusations by a husband against his wife.

d. **But if the thing is true, and evidences of virginity are not found for the young woman**: If this were the case, the woman was to be executed by stoning. This was not only for her sexual promiscuity (**to play the harlot**), but for her attempt to deceive her husband.

i. This law must be seen in connection with the command in Exo. 22:16-17, which commands that a man who *entices a virgin* must *surely pay the bride-price for her to be his wife*. This law in Deuteronomy is directed against the truly wanton woman, who has given up her virginity, yet not claimed her rights under Exo. 22:16-17. She did not value her virginity at the time she gave it up, yet she wanted to claim the benefits of it by deceiving her husband.

ii. All this simply reinforces the principle that virginity was valued, highly valued, in Israel.

Today, far too many people - especially women - sell themselves cheaply by easily giving away their virginity. A man illustrated this with a true story about a friend who owned an antique store and had a table for

sale. The table was worth \$600, but was marked down to \$300. A man tried to bargain her down to \$200, and not only did she refuse, but she realized the true value of the table, and upped the price to its true worth - even when offered \$300.

The man

finally bought the table for \$600, and certainly treated it like a \$600 table - because its worth had been fought for. Many women who know they are being treated shabbily by men have contributed to the problem by selling themselves cheaply.

2. (22) The penalty for adultery.

If a man is found lying with a woman married to a husband, then both of them shall die; the man that lay with the woman, and the woman; so you shall put away the evil from Israel.

a. **Both of them shall die:** God commanded the death penalty for adultery. This was primarily because of the exceedingly great social consequences of this sin. Therefore, God commanded the ultimate penalty against it.

i. God also specifically instructs: **both the man that lay with the woman, and the woman.** Adultery was not to be condemned with a double-standard; if it was wrong for the woman, it was wrong for the man, and vice-versa.

b. **Then both of them shall die:** As a practical matter, this death penalty was rarely carried out, as is the case in most of these situation where capital punishment is commanded.

This is because any capital crime required two or three witnesses, and the witnesses had to be so sure of what they saw that they were willing to "cast the first stone" - that is, initiate the execution (Deu. 17:6-7).

i. So, particularly in a case of adultery (or other sexual sins) there would rarely be two eyewitnesses willing to initiate the execution - and so capital punishment would not be carried out.

ii. This also helps us to understand what Jesus was doing when confronting the crowd who brought to Him the woman taken in adultery. By their presence and words, they claimed to have caught the woman in the act - but why then did they not bring the guilty man as well? And who was willing to cast the first stone - that is, initiate the execution? (Joh. 8:1-12)

c. So you shall put away the evil from

Israel: Though the death penalty for adultery was carried out rarely, it still had value. It communicated loudly and clearly an *ideal* that Israel was to live up to, and it made people regard their sin much more seriously. Today, we have done away with this ideal, and people don't care much about adultery - and society suffers greatly as a result.

3. (23-29) Laws concerning rape.

If a young woman *who is* a virgin is betrothed to a husband, and a man finds her in the city and lies with her, then you shall bring them both out to the gate of that city, and you shall stone them to death with stones, the young woman because she did not cry out in the city, and the man because he humbled his neighbor's wife; so you shall put away the evil from among you. But if a man finds a betrothed young woman in the countryside, and the man

forces her and lies with her, then only the man who lay with her shall die.

But you shall do nothing to the young woman;

there is in the young woman no sin *deserving* of death, for just as when a man rises against his neighbor and kills him, even so *is* this matter. For he found her in the countryside, *and* the betrothed young woman cried out, but *there was* no one to save her. If a man finds a young woman *who is* a virgin, who is not betrothed, and he seizes her and lies with her, and they are found out, then the man who lay with her shall give to the young woman's father fifty *shekels* of silver, and she shall be his wife because he has humbled her; he shall not be permitted to divorce her all his days.

a. **If a young woman who is a virgin is**

betrothed to a husband: If a man had intimate relations with a virgin who was **betrothed to a husband**, and it happened **in the city** (and no one immediately hears the woman **cry out** in an attempt to stop the man), then both were to be executed.

i. The woman was to be executed for disgracing her virginity; the man was to be executed **because he humbled his neighbor's wife**. Interestingly, the woman was considered the **wife** of another man, even though she was only **betrothed**, and was still a **virgin**, having not yet consummated the marriage.

b. **But if a man finds a betrothed young**

woman in the countryside: If a man had intimate relations with a virgin who was **betrothed**, and it happened **in the countryside** (where no one could hear the woman, even if she should cry out), then only the man was to be executed, because the

woman was presumed to be the victim of rape.

i. Significantly, the woman was not blamed

for the rape, and it was *presumed* that she was innocent in this circumstance.

c. **If a man finds a young woman who is a virgin, who is not betrothed:** If a man had intimate relations with a virgin **who is not betrothed**, then he must pay a fine and was obligated to marry the woman (presumably, if she will have him), and he forfeited his right to divorce her in the future.

i. Some Jewish commentators note that the **fifty shekels of silver** were to be paid *in addition to* the dowry.

4. (30) A law concerning incest.

A man shall not take his father's wife, nor uncover his father's bed.

a. **A man shall not take his father's wife:** This probably described the case of a son marrying his stepmother after his father had

died. This was considered incest, even though there was not a blood relation, because he was considered to have had **uncovered his father's bed**.

b. **Nor uncover his father's bed:**

Significantly, this was exactly the same kind of immoral relationship that the Corinthian church accepted, and Paul had to rebuke them about -

that a man has his father's wife! (1Co. 5:1-2)

© 2006 David Guzik - No distribution beyond personal use without permission **2** If the owner does not live near you or you do not know who the owner is, then you must corral the animal at your house and let it stay with you until the owner looks for it; then you must return it to him. **3** You shall do the same to his donkey, his clothes, or anything else your neighbor has lost and you have found; you must not refuse to get involved. **4** When you see your neighbor's donkey or ox fallen along the road, do not ignore it; instead, you must be sure to help him get the animal on its feet again. **5** A woman must not wear men's clothing, nor should a man

dress up in women's clothing, for anyone who does this is offensive to the LORD your God.

6 If you happen to notice a bird's nest along the road, whether in a tree or on the ground, and there are chicks or eggs with the mother bird sitting on them, you must not take the mother from the young. **7** You must be sure to let the mother go, but you may take the young for yourself.

Do this so that it may go well with you and you may have a long life.

8 If you build a new house, you must construct a guard rail around your roof to avoid being culpable in the event someone should fall from it.

9 You must not plant your vineyard with two kinds of seed; otherwise the entire yield, both of the seed you plant and the produce of the vineyard, will be defiled. **10**

You must not plow with an ox and a donkey harnessed together. **11** You must not wear clothing made with wool and linen meshed together. **12** You shall make yourselves tassels for the four corners of the clothing you wear.

13 Suppose a man marries a woman, has sexual relations with her, and then rejects her, **14** accusing her of impropriety and defaming her reputation by saying, "I married this woman but when I had sexual relations with her I discovered she was not a virgin!" **15** Then the father and mother of the young woman must produce the evidence of virginity for the elders of the city at the gate.

16 The young woman's father must say to the elders, "I gave my daughter to this man and he has rejected her. **17**

Moreover, he has raised accusations of impropriety by saying, 'I discovered your daughter was not a virgin,' but this is the evidence of my daughter's virginity!" The cloth must then be spread out before the city's elders. **18** The elders of that city must then seize the man and punish him.

19 They will fine him one hundred shekels of silver and give them to the young woman's father, for the man who made the accusation ruined the reputation of an Israelite virgin.

She will then become his wife and he may never divorce her as long as he lives.

20 But if the accusation is true and the young woman was not a virgin, **21** the men of her city must bring the young woman to the door of her father's house and stone her to death, for she has done a disgraceful thing in Israel by behaving like a prostitute while living in her father's house. In this way you will purge evil from among you.

22 If a man is caught having sexual relations with a married woman both the man who had relations with the woman and the woman herself must die; in this way you will purge evil from Israel.

23 If a virgin is engaged to a man and another man meets her in the city and has sexual relations with her, **24** you must bring the two of them to the gate of that city and stone them to death, the young woman because she did not cry out though in the city and the man because he violated his neighbor's fiancée; in this way you will purge evil from among you. **25** But if the man came across the engaged woman in the field and overpowered her and raped her, then only the rapist must die. **26** You must not do anything to the young woman – she has done nothing deserving of death. This case is the same as when someone attacks another person and murders him, **27** for the man met her in the field and the engaged woman cried out, but there was no one to rescue her.

28 Suppose a man comes across a virgin who is not engaged and overpowers and rapes her and they are discovered. **29** The man who has raped her must pay her father fifty shekels of silver and she must become his wife because he has violated her; he may never divorce her as long as he lives.

30 (23:1) A man may not marry his father's former wife and in this way dishonor his father.

1 A man with crushed or severed genitals may not enter the assembly of the LORD.

Guzik - Deuteronomy 23:1-25

Deuteronomy 23 - Instructions to the Assembly,

Various Laws

A. Those excluded from the congregation of Israel.

1. (1) Eunuchs are excluded from the congregation of Israel. He who is emasculated by crushing or mutilation shall not enter the assembly of the LORD.

a. **By crushing or mutilation:** This refers to those **emasculated** by either birth defect, accident, or by deliberate emasculation.

b. **Shall not enter the assembly of the LORD:** When we read this term, it usually refers to the nation gathered before the LORD

in worship, such as when they were gathered at Mount Sinai (Deu. 5:22, 9:10, 10:4, and 18:16).

But it doesn't always have this sense.

i. Deu. 31:30 refers to *all the congregation of Israel*, while Deu. 31:28 makes it clear that "all the congregation" was gathered through *all the elders of your tribes, and your officers*. So, in some contexts, *the congregation* can refer to *elders* and *officers*.

It may very well be that these exclusions from the **assembly of the LORD** are exclusions not from the religious life of Israel, but from the political life of the nation.

ii. Poole suggests that the idea of **the assembly of the LORD** is the leadership, or the rulers of Israel. These people were barred not from the religious life of Israel, but from the political life of the nation.

Trapp agrees, saying on **shall not enter the assembly of the LORD**: "Shall not go in and out before the people as a public officer." Clarke adds, "If by entering into the congregation be meant the bearing a *civil* office among the people, such as magistrate,

judge, &c., then the reason of the law is very plain."

iii. Isa. 56:3-5 shows that even eunuchs and foreigners could be accepted before the LORD if they would obey Him, and they would be accepted before the "normal" people who disobeyed God.

c. **Shall not enter the assembly of the LORD:** Eunuchs were excluded because God's covenant with Israel was vitally connected with the idea of the *seed*, and emasculation is a "crime" against the seed of man. Additionally, most eunuchs were made to be so in pagan ceremonies where they were dedicated to pagan gods.

2. (2) Those of unknown parentage are excluded from the assembly of Israel (civil leadership in Israel).

One of illegitimate birth shall not enter the assembly of the LORD; even to the tenth generation none of his *descendants* shall enter the assembly of the LORD.

a. **One of illegitimate birth:** It is difficult to define exactly what is meant by the term **of illegitimate birth**. Some later Jewish writers defined this as someone who was born of an incestuous relationship between Jews; others said it refers to those born of mixed marriages between the people of Israel and their pagan neighbors (as in Neh. 13:23).

3. (3-6) Ammonites and Moabites are excluded from the congregation of Israel (civil leadership in Israel).

An Ammonite or Moabite shall not enter the assembly of the LORD; even to the tenth generation none of his *descendants* shall enter the assembly of the LORD forever, because they did not meet you with bread and water on the road when you came out of Egypt, and because they hired against you Balaam the son of Beor

from Pethor of Mesopotamia, to curse you.

Nevertheless the LORD your God would not listen to Balaam, but the LORD your God turned the curse into a blessing for you, because the LORD

your God loves you. You shall not seek their peace nor their prosperity all your days forever.

a. **An Ammonite or Moabite shall not enter the assembly of the LORD:** The Moabites and the Ammonites not only treated Israel

cruelly on their way to the Promised Land, but they also were a people with a disgraceful beginning. Moab and Ammon were the two sons

born to the daughters of Lot through their incest with their father (Gen. 19:30-38).

4. (7-8) Edomites and Egyptians (**of the third generation**) are permitted to be among the congregation of Israel (civil leadership in Israel).

You shall not abhor an Edomite, for he *is* your brother. You shall not abhor an Egyptian, because you were an alien in his land. The

children of the third generation born to them may enter the assembly of the LORD.

a. **You shall not abhor an Edomite:** The Edomites were ethnically related to Israel, because Israel's brother Esau was the father of the Edomite peoples. Therefore, Israel was commanded to **not abhor an Edomite**.

i. Interestingly, one of the most famous Edomites in history was abhorred by Israel - Herod the Great. Many of his spectacular building projects in Judea were intended to not only glorify his own name, but to win the favor of the Jews who despised him as an Edomite.

b. **You shall not abhor an Egyptian:** The Egyptians were also to receive more favor than the Moabites or Ammonites,

because Israel was a guest in Egypt for almost 400 years. Though

the years Israel spent in Egypt were hard, God had a great purpose for them. Egypt was like a mother's womb for Israel; they went in as a large family, and came out as a distinct nation.

B. Miscellaneous laws.

1. (9-14) Cleanliness in the camp.

When the army goes out against your enemies, then keep yourself from every wicked thing. If there is any man among you who becomes unclean by some occurrence in the night, then he shall go outside the camp; he shall not come inside the camp. But it shall be, when evening comes, that he shall wash with water; and when the sun sets, he may come into the camp. Also you shall have a place outside the camp, where you may go out; and you shall have an implement among your equipment, and when you sit down outside, you shall dig with it and turn and cover your refuse. For the LORD your God walks in the midst of your camp, to deliver you and give your enemies over to you; therefore your camp shall be holy, that He may see no unclean thing among you, and turn away from you.

a. **When the army goes out against your enemies, then keep yourself from every wicked thing:** God commanded *ceremonial* cleanliness among the army of Israel. **Some occurrence in the night** probably refers to nocturnal emissions, and the cleansing ceremony for this is described in Lev. 15:16-18.

After observing the ceremonial washing, **he may come into the camp again.**

b. **And you shall have an implement among your equipment:** God commanded *sanitary* cleanliness among the army of Israel; each soldier was to carry some type of shovel, with which he could **cover** [his] **refuse.**

i. This command was given, "Partly, to prevent the annoyance of ourselves or others; partly, to preserve and exercise modesty and natural honesty; and principally, that by such outward rites they might be inured to the greater reverence of the Divine Majesty, and the greater caution to avoid all real and moral uncleanness." (Poole)

ii. Some ancient rabbis taught that the holy city of Jerusalem should be considered "the camp of the LORD." Under this reasoning, one had to go outside the camp to relieve one's self. However, for many people, the trip outside the large "camp" of Israel (the city of Jerusalem) was longer than what would be permitted on the Sabbath. Therefore, as a practical matter, the rabbis prohibited a Jew from relieving themselves on the Sabbath day.

2. (15-16) Israel to provide asylum for the foreign escaped slave.

You shall not give back to his master the slave who has escaped from his master to you. He may dwell with you in your midst, in the place which he chooses within one of your gates, where it seems best to him; you shall not oppress him.

a. You shall not give back to his master the slave who has escaped from his

master to you: "The refugee slave referred to had evidently come from a foreign land.

Otherwise there would have been legal complications, since slaves were a valued possession." (Thompson)

3. (17-18) Sacred prostitution banned.

There shall be no *ritual* harlot of the daughters of Israel, or a perverted one of the sons of Israel.

You shall not bring the wages of a harlot or the price of a dog to the house of the LORD your God for any vowed offering, for both of these *are* an abomination to the LORD your God.

a. **Ritual harlot:** This refers to a female prostitute. The term **perverted one** refers to a male prostitute, both of which were common among the pagan religions of the Canaanites and others in the ancient world.

i. Later, in the reigns of Asa (1Ki. 15:12) and Josiah (2Ki. 23:7) we are told that the *perverted persons* (male prostitutes) were expelled from Israel. This means that for some period of time before they were expelled, they were allowed to practice their "holy prostitution," which was an

abomination to the LORD your God.

b. **You shall not bring the wages of a harlot or the price of a dog to the house of the LORD your God:** The pay of a female prostitute (**the hire of a harlot**) and the pay of a male prostitute (**the price of a dog**) were never to be offered to the LORD. This was a common practice among the sacred prostitution cults that abounded in the ancient world.

i. A reminder of the principle that the work of the LORD does not need money from immoral or ill-gotten gains.

ii. Even in its most gross forms, this kind of practice has been allowed in the institutional church. "And what a stinking shame is that, that stews and brothel-houses are licensed by the Pope, who reaps no small profit by them?" (Trapp, writing in 1659)

4. (19-20) No interest to be charged to the family of Israel.

You shall not charge interest to your brother; interest on money *or* food *or* anything that is lent out at interest. To a foreigner you may charge interest, but to your brother you shall not charge interest, that the LORD your God may bless you in all to which you set your hand in the land which you are entering to possess.

a. **You shall not charge interest to your brother; interest on money or food:** The mention of **food**, and the similar command in Exo. 22:25, leads most to understand that interest was prohibited on loans made to the poor for their basic needs, and did not prohibit the taking of interest on loans that were not for relief of the poor.

b. **To a foreigner you may charge interest:** "But since merchants from other nations might come for business reasons to Israel, or make loans on interest to Israelites, foreigners could be charged interest." (Kalland) 5. (21-23)
The importance of keeping our vows.

When you make a vow to the LORD your God, you shall not delay to pay it; for the LORD your God will surely require it of you, and it would be sin to you. But if you abstain from vowing, it shall not be sin to you. That which has gone from your lips you shall keep and perform, for you voluntarily vowed to the LORD your God what you have promised with your mouth.

a. **You shall not delay to pay it:** A vow before God is no small thing. God expressly commanded that Israel should be careful to

keep its vows and to fulfill every oath made, **for the LORD your God will surely require it of you, and it would be sin to.**

i. In many circles today, the breaking of an oath is just standard business practice - but before God, it is simply sin.

b. **If you abstain from vowing:** Many wonder if vows or oaths are permitted for a Christian today.

i. Some think not, because of what Jesus said in Mat. 5:34-37: *But I say to you, do not swear at all: neither by heaven, for it is God's throne; nor by the earth, for it is His footstool; nor by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the great King. Nor shall you swear by your head, because you cannot make one hair white or black. But let your 'Yes' be 'Yes,' and your 'No,' 'No.' For whatever is more than these*

is from the evil one. (See also Jam. 5:12) ii. But, in context of the rest of Scripture, we see that Jesus was not forbidding oaths, as much as telling us that we should be so filled with integrity in our words that an oath is unnecessary.

iii. Jesus answered under oath in a court (Mat. 26:63-64), and God Himself swears oaths (Luk. 1:73, Act. 2:30, Heb. 3:18, 6:13, 17).

c. **But if you abstain from vowing, it shall not be sin to you:** Vows are never required by God; many times it is better not to make a vow.

d. **That which has gone from your lips you shall keep and perform:** This shows how important it is to keep a vow once made. As it says in Ecc. 5:4-5, *When you make a vow to God, do not delay to pay it; for He has no pleasure in fools. Pay what you have vowed. It is better not to vow than to vow and not pay.*

i. Many vows are just plain foolish - "I'll never do that again" is a foolish vow, and it is foolish and unwise to demand such a vow from someone else.

ii. Of course, there is a vow we all can and should make - a vow to praise God: *Vows made to You are binding upon me, O God; I will render praises unto You* (Psa. 56:12). *So I will sing praise to Your name forever, that I may daily perform my vows* (Psa. 61:8).

6. (24-25) The right to glean is given to travelers.

When you come into your neighbor's vineyard, you may eat your fill of grapes at your pleasure, but you shall not put *any* in your container. When you come into your neighbor's standing grain, you may pluck the heads with your hand, but you shall not use a sickle on your neighbor's standing grain.

a. **When you come into your neighbor's**

vineyard: The idea is that, as one traveled they had the right to pick off a few grapes or heads of grain to eat along

the way. It wasn't the right to harvest from your neighbor's fields, but to provide for your own immediate needs.

b. You may pluck the heads with your

hand: This is the law Jesus and His disciples were operating under when they *plucked heads of grain and ate them, rubbing them in their hands* (Luk. 6:1-5). They were accused by the Pharisees of breaking the Sabbath, but not of stealing grain, because the Pharisees knew this law in the book of Deuteronomy.

© 2006 David Guzik - No distribution beyond personal use without permission **2** A person of illegitimate birth may not enter the assembly of the LORD; to the tenth generation no one related to him may do so.

3 An Ammonite or Moabite may not enter the assembly of the LORD; to the tenth generation none of their descendants shall ever do so, **4** for they did not meet you with food and water on the way as you came from Egypt, and furthermore, they hired Balaam son of Beor of Pethor in Aram Naharaim to curse you. **5** But the LORD your God refused to listen to Balaam and changed the curse to a blessing, for the LORD your God loves you. **6** You must not seek peace and prosperity for them through all the ages to come. **7** You must not hate an Edomite, for he is your relative; you must not hate an Egyptian, for you lived as a foreigner in his land. **8** Children of the third generation born to them may enter the assembly of the LORD.

9 When you go out as an army against your enemies, guard yourselves against anything impure. **10** If there is someone among you who is impure because of some nocturnal emission, he must leave the camp; he may not reenter it immediately. **11** When evening arrives he must wash himself with water and then at sunset he may reenter the camp.

12 You are to have a place outside the camp to serve as a latrine. **13** You must have a spade among your other equipment and when you relieve yourself outside you must

dig a hole with the spade and then turn and cover your excrement. **14** For the LORD your God walks about in the middle of your camp to deliver you and defeat your enemies for you. Therefore your camp should be holy, so that he does not see anything indecent among you and turn away from you.

15 You must not return an escaped slave to his master when he has run away to you. **16** Indeed, he may live among you in any place he chooses, in whichever of your villages he prefers; you must not oppress him.

17 There must never be a sacred prostitute among the young women of Israel nor a sacred male prostitute among the young men of Israel. **18** You must never bring the pay of a female prostitute or the wage of a male prostitute into the temple of the LORD your God in fulfillment of any vow, for both of these are abhorrent to the LORD your God.

19 You must not charge interest on a loan to your fellow Israelite, whether on money, food, or anything else that has been loaned with interest. **20** You may lend with interest to a foreigner, but not to your fellow Israelite; if you keep this command the LORD your God will bless you in all you undertake in the land you are about to enter to possess. **21** When you make a vow to the LORD your God you must not delay in fulfilling it, for otherwise he will surely hold you accountable as a sinner. **22** If you refrain from making a vow, it will not be sinful. **23** Whatever you vow, you must be careful to do what you have promised, such as what you have vowed to the LORD your God as a freewill offering. **24** When you enter the vineyard of your neighbor you may eat as many grapes as you please, but you must not take away any in a container. **25** When you go into the ripe grain fields of your neighbor you may pluck off the kernels with your hand, but you must not use a sickle on your neighbor's ripe grain.

1 If a man marries a woman and she does not please him because he has found something offensive in her, then he

may draw up a divorce document, give it to her, and evict her from his house.

Guzik - Deuteronomy 24:1-22

Deuteronomy 24 - The Law of Divorce and Other

Various Laws

A. Divorce, remarriage and marriage.

1. (1) The law of divorce in ancient Israel.

When a man takes a wife and marries her, and it happens that she finds no favor in his eyes because he has found some uncleanness in her,

and he writes her a certificate of divorce, puts *it* in her hand, and sends her out of his house, a. **A certificate of divorce:**

According to these laws, divorce was allowed in Israel, but carefully regulated. Under God's law, the marriage contract cannot be simply dissolved as soon as one partner wants out; there must be cause for **a certificate of divorce**.

i. Even with cause, divorce was never to be seen as a preferred or easy option. The

Hebrew word translated **divorce** has as its root the idea of "a hewing off, a cutting apart" - it is the amputation of that which is one flesh.

ii. "(Christians) all regard divorce as something like cutting up a living body, as a kind of surgical operation. Some think that the operation is so violent that it cannot be done at all; others admit that it is a desperate remedy in extreme cases. They are all agreed that it is more like having your legs cut off than it is like dissolving a business partnership or even deserting a regiment." (C.S. Lewis)

b. **He writes her a certificate of divorce:** God commands here that any divorce be sealed with **a certificate of divorce**. In other words, it was not enough for a man to just declare "we're divorced" to his wife. The divorce had to be recognized legally just as the marriage

had been, so **a certificate of divorce** - a legal document - must be issued, and properly served (**puts it in her hand**).

c. **She finds no favor in his eyes because he has found some uncleanness in her**: This describes the *grounds* of divorce and indicates that a **certificate of divorce** could not be written for just any reason. It had to be founded on these two important clauses.

i. There has to be **some uncleanness in her**. Some later Rabbis defined **uncleanness** as anything in the wife which might displease the husband. At the time of Jesus, some Rabbis taught that if a wife burned her husband's breakfast, he could divorce her.

ii. But Jesus carefully and properly defined what **uncleanness** is in Deu. 24:1. He said, *whoever divorces his wife, except for sexual immorality, and marries another, commits adultery* (Mat. 19:9). Jesus rightly understood that **uncleanness** refers to *sexual immorality*, a broad term referring to sexual sin, which includes, but is not restricted to, sexual intercourse with someone who is not your spouse. The Hebrew word translated **uncleanness** in itself implies the meaning of sexual immorality; it is literally, "nakedness of a thing."

iii. So, if a husband finds **some uncleanness in her**, he has the right to give his wife **a certificate of divorce**. But he is not *obligated* to do so. It must also be that **she finds no favor in his eyes**

because he has found some

uncleanness in her. In other words, it must be that the husband is so troubled at his wife's sexual immorality that he simply cannot look upon her with **favor in his eyes** any more. The lack of **favor in his eyes** must be **because** of her **uncleanness**.

iv. This helps us understand what Jesus said in Mat. 19:8: *Moses, because of the hardness of your hearts, permitted you to divorce your wives, but from the beginning it was not so.* If a woman did not have a hard heart, she would never commit sexual immorality against her husband, and there would be no need for divorce. If a husband did not have any hardness in his heart, he could forgive and still look upon his wife with **favor in his eyes**, even though she was guilty of sexual immorality. But because God knows there is hardness in our hearts -

both in the offending and offended parties -
He grants *permission* for divorce.

v. In the days of Jesus, Rabbis taught that it was the *duty* of a godly man to divorce his wife if she displeased him. Both Moses and Jesus make it clear that God *permits* divorce in certain circumstances, but never *commands* it.

vi. Yet, if someone has Biblical grounds of divorce (which, according to 1Co. 7:15, includes abandonment by an unbelieving spouse), they certainly do have *permission* to divorce, and God does not "hold it against them," unless of course, He has specifically told them to *not* divorce and they are disobeying His specific word to their lives.

d. **He writes her a certificate of divorce:** Most people think that in ancient Israel, only husbands had the right to divorce their wives, and wives did not have the right of divorce. But what is said here may be intended to be applied to both husband and wife. Jesus, in Mar. 10:12 says *and if a woman divorces her husband and marries another*, clearly saying that in His day, a wife had the right to divorce.

2. (2-4) The law of remarriage in ancient Israel.

When she has departed from his house, and goes and becomes another man's *wife*, *if* the latter husband detests her and writes her a certificate of divorce, puts *it* in her hand, and sends her out of his house, or if the latter husband dies who took her as his wife, *then* her former husband who divorced her must not take her back to be his wife after she has been defiled; for that *is* an abomination before the LORD, and you shall not bring sin on the land which the LORD your God is giving you *as* an inheritance.

a. **Her former husband who divorced her**

must not take her back: This is a strong law, saying that if a divorced woman marries again, she could not return to her first husband, should her second marriage end through divorce or death. To break this law was **an abomination before the LORD**.

b. **An abomination before the LORD:** It

seems that it might be a good thing for the first husband and wife to get back together. But this command is made because God wanted both marriage and divorce to be seen as serious,

permanent things. One couldn't be married or divorced casually; it had to be carefully thought out because it was *permanent*.

i. This law would also strengthen the second marriage; it would discourage a spouse from thinking they might as well just leave their second marriage and go back to their first

partner.

3. (5) The law honoring marriage.

When a man has taken a new wife, he shall not go out to war or be charged with any business; he shall be free at home one year, and bring happiness to his wife whom he has taken.

a. **He shall be free at home one year:** This was God's way of honoring and blessing the marriage covenant. He allowed men who were newly married to be exempt from military or other state service for one year.

b. **Bring happiness to his wife:** This is an important job for every husband. Even as before the LORD, we find our lives by losing them (Mat. 10:39), so a husband will find the most

happiness if he will **bring happiness to his wife.**

i. As the role of the husband in Ephesians 5 is described, we see that God emphasizes the essential oneness between husband and wife. The husband cannot make his wife happy without also bringing happiness into his own life. Conversely, he cannot bring misery into the life of his spouse without also bringing misery into his own life.

ii. A happy wife is the foundation for a happy home; a bitter or contentious wife makes for a miserable home. *A continual dripping on a very rainy day and a contentious woman are alike* (Pro. 27:15). *Better to dwell in a corner of a housetop, than in a house shared with a contentious woman.* (Pro. 21:9). *Better to dwell in the wilderness, than with a contentious and angry woman* (Pro. 21:19).

B. Other various laws.

1. (6) Do not take someone's livelihood as a pledge.

No man shall take the lower or the upper millstone in pledge, for he takes *one's* living in pledge.

a. **No man shall take the lower or the**

upper millstone in pledge: A **millstone** was something essential to a family's livelihood, therefore it was forbidden to take it as a guarantee for a loan.

i. This warns Israel against taking advantage of each other in times of great need. We must take care that we never unfairly profit from the poverty or difficulty of others.

b. **For he takes one's living in pledge:** Non-essential items could be taken as a **pledge**.

Although interest could not be charged on a loan to an Israelite in need, a **pledge** could be taken - collateral to guarantee the repayment of the loan. This command forbids the taking of collateral that would take away a man's ability to provide for his family, and get himself out of debt.

2. (7) The punishment for kidnapping.

If a man is found kidnapping any of his brethren of the children of Israel, and mistreats him or sells him, then that kidnapper shall die; and you shall put away the evil from among you.

a. **If a man is found kidnapping any of his brethren of the children of Israel:**

Kidnapping was usually done in the ancient world not so much for return and ransom, but so that one could sell the one abducted to

slavery, just as was done to Joseph by his brothers (Gen. 37:28).

b. **That kidnapper shall die:** This crime was serious enough before God, so as to command the death penalty.

3. (8-9) The command to act swiftly when leprosy breaks out.

Take heed in an outbreak of leprosy, that you carefully observe and do according to all that the priests, the Levites, shall teach you; just as I commanded them, so you shall be careful to do.

Remember what the LORD your God did to Miriam on the way when you came out of Egypt.

a. **Take heed in an outbreak of leprosy:** Leviticus 13 and 14 describe in great detail how God wanted lepers examined and quarantined.

Because leprosy was such a dreaded disease, God commands here that they **take heed in an outbreak of leprosy**, so it would not become a plague throughout Israel.

b. **Remember what the LORD your God did**

to Miriam: In Numbers 12, Miriam led her brother Aaron in a rebellion against Moses, and for it, God struck her with leprosy. Though Moses prayed for her to be healed, God let her be a leper for seven days before healing her, and she was *shut out of the camp seven days* (Num. 12:14). If someone as prominent as Miriam was quarantined as a leper, it showed

that every other leper in Israel should also be quarantined.

4. (10-13) Handling a pledge rightly.

When you lend your brother anything, you shall not go into his house to get his pledge. You shall stand outside, and the man to whom you lend shall bring the pledge out to you. And if the man *is* poor, you shall not keep his pledge overnight.

You shall in any case return the pledge to him again when the sun goes down, that he may sleep in his own garment and bless you; and it shall be righteousness to you before the LORD

your God.

a. **You shall not go into his house to get**

his pledge: When a **pledge** was taken for a loan, it had to be received in a way that kept the poor man's dignity.

i. God does not condemn the *principle* of taking a pledge, only commanding that it be received humanely. The idea of taking

collateral for a loan is valid, because it

encourages personal responsibility in the one receiving the loan.

b. **You shall not keep his pledge overnight:** Assuming the pledge was something to keep the man warm (such as a garment or a blanket, which would often be the only pledge a poor man could make), the pledge had to be returned so the man could use it to keep warm overnight.

i. "The Jews in several cases did act contrary to this rule, and we find them cuttingly reproved for it by the Prophet Amos, chap.

ii. 8." (Clarke)

5. (14-15) The command to pay your workers.

You shall not oppress a hired servant *who is* poor and needy, *whether* one of your brethren or one of the aliens who *is* in your land within your gates. Each day you shall give *him* his wages, and not let the sun go down on it, for he *is* poor and has set his heart on it; lest he cry out against you to the LORD, and it be sin to you.

a. **You shall not oppress a hired servant:** A servant might be oppressed by not being paid, or by brutal or unsafe working conditions. God commanded employers to treat their employees fairly and kindly.

b. **Lest he cry out against you to the LORD:** The LORD hears the cry of the oppressed. Jam.

5:4 warns the rich man who oppresses his workers: *Indeed the wages of the laborers who mowed your fields, which you kept back by fraud, cry out; and the cries of the reapers have reached the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth.*

6. (16) Each shall bear his own sin.

Fathers shall not be put to death for *their* children, nor shall the children be put to death for *their* fathers; a person shall be put to death for his own sin.

a. **A person shall be put to death for his**

own sin: God commanded that each individual be responsible for their own sin. A father cannot be blamed and responsible for the sin of their (grown) children, and the children cannot be blamed and responsible for the sin of their parents.

i. It is wrong for a parent to automatically blame themselves for their wayward children; though they may have a part in the problem, it isn't always the case.

b. **For his own sin:** There are instances when God commands that a whole family be punished for sin, such as with the family of Achan in Jos.

7:16-26. When God deals with a whole family, it shows that there must have been some conspiracy between family members, for each is responsible **for his own sin**.

7. (17-18) A command to be compassionate and fair.

You shall not pervert justice due the stranger or the fatherless, nor take a widow's garment as a pledge. But you shall remember that you were a slave in Egypt, and the LORD your God redeemed you from there; therefore I command you to do this thing.

a. **You shall remember:** If Israel kept remembering how much God had done for them, it would make them more compassionate and fair in dealing with others. We must always deal with others remembering how much God has blessed and forgiven us.

8. (19-22) Leave behind some of the harvest for the poor.

When you reap your harvest in your field, and forget a sheaf in the field, you shall not go back to get it; it shall be for the stranger, the fatherless, and the widow, that the LORD your God may bless you in all the work of your hands.

When you beat your olive trees, you shall not go over the boughs again; it shall be for the stranger, the fatherless, and the widow. When

you gather the grapes of your vineyard, you shall not glean *it* afterward; it shall be for the stranger, the fatherless, and the widow. And you shall remember that you were a slave in the land of

Egypt; therefore I command you to do this thing.

a. It shall be for the stranger, the

fatherless, and the widow: This was one of God's welfare programs for Israel, establishing the right of the gleaner. Farmers were instructed to not completely harvest their fields, so that some would be left behind for the hard-working poor to gather for themselves.

b. Therefore I command you to do this

thing: This was a wonderful way of helping the poor. It commanded farmers to have a generous heart, and it made the poor to be active and work for their food. It made a way for them to provide for their own needs with dignity.

© 2006 David Guzik - No distribution beyond personal use without permission **2** When she has left him she may go and become someone else's wife. **3** If the second husband rejects her and then divorces her, gives her the papers, and evicts her from his house, or if the second husband who married her dies, **4** her first husband who divorced her is not permitted to remarry her after she has become ritually impure, for that is offensive to the LORD. You must not bring guilt on the land which the LORD your God is giving you as an inheritance. **5** When a man is newly married, he need not go into the army nor be obligated in any way; he must be free to stay at home for a full year and bring joy to the wife he has married.

6 One must not take either lower or upper millstones as security on a loan, for that is like taking a life itself as

security.

7 If a man is found kidnapping a person from among his fellow Israelites, and regards him as mere property and sells him, that kidnapper must die. In this way you will purge evil from among you.

8 Be careful during an outbreak of leprosy to follow precisely all that the Levitical priests instruct you; as I have commanded them, so you should do. **9** Remember what the LORD your God did to Miriam along the way after you left Egypt.

10 When you make any kind of loan to your neighbor, you may not go into his house to claim what he is offering as security. **11** You must stand outside and the person to whom you are making the loan will bring out to you what he is offering as security. **12** If the person is poor you may not use what he gives you as security for a covering. **13**

You must by all means return to him at sunset the item he gave you as security so that he may sleep in his outer garment and bless you for it; it will be considered a just deed by the LORD your God.

14 You must not oppress a lowly and poor servant, whether one from among your fellow Israelites or from the resident foreigners who are living in your land and villages.

15 You must pay his wage that very day before the sun sets, for he is poor and his life depends on it. Otherwise he will cry out to the LORD against you, and you will be guilty of sin.

16 Fathers must not be put to death for what their children do, nor children for what their fathers do; each must be put to death for his own sin.

17 You must not pervert justice due a resident foreigner or an orphan, or take a widow's garment as security for a loan.

18 Remember that you were slaves in Egypt and that the LORD your God redeemed you from there; therefore I am commanding you to do all this. **19** Whenever you reap your harvest in your field and leave some unraked grain there,

you must not return to get it; it should go to the resident foreigner, orphan, and widow so that the LORD your God may bless all the work you do. **20** When you beat your olive tree you must not repeat the procedure; the remaining olives belong to the resident foreigner, orphan, and widow. **21** When you gather the grapes of your vineyard you must not do so a second time; they should go to the resident foreigner, orphan, and widow. **22**

Remember that you were slaves in the land of Egypt; therefore, I am commanding you to do all this.

1 If controversy arises between people, they should go to court for judgment. When the judges hear the case, they shall exonerate the innocent but condemn the guilty.

Guzik - Deuteronomy 25:1-19

Deuteronomy 25 - More Laws on Various

Subjects

A. Two laws to protect criminals and animals.

1. (1-3) A limit on corporal punishment.

If there is a dispute between men, and they come to court, that *the judges* may judge them, and they justify the righteous and condemn the wicked, then it shall be, if the wicked man deserves to be beaten, that the judge will cause him to lie down and be beaten in his presence, according to his guilt, with a certain number of blows. Forty blows he may give him *and* no more, lest he should exceed this and beat him with many blows above these, and your brother

be humiliated in your sight.

a. **They justify the righteous and condemn**

the guilty: This is the simple responsibility of all government and courts. As Paul described the role of government in Rom. 13:4: *For he is God's minister to you for good. But if you do evil, be afraid; for he does not bear the sword in vain; for he is God's minister, an avenger to execute wrath on him who practices evil.*

b. **If the wicked man deserves to be**

beaten: Apparently, God considers that some criminals are **wicked** and deserve **to be beaten**. We seem to have a justice system today that considers itself more compassionate and kind than God Himself, yet we can't say that we live in a more just or safe society.

i. "Among the Mohammedans there are very few law-suits, and the reason is given . . .

because they that sue others without just

cause are to be whipped publicly." (Trapp) c. **Forty blows**

may he give him and no more: Though sometimes a beating was the appropriate punishment, God also agrees with the idea that there is a such thing as excessive

punishment, and this was intended to prevent excessive punishment. Additionally, the beating was to be administered in the presence of the judge (**and be beaten in his presence**), so he could make sure the punishment was not excessive.

i. In 2Co. 11:24, Paul listed this among his "apostolic credentials": *From the Jews five times I received forty stripes minus one.*

The *forty stripes minus one* means Paul was beaten by the Jewish authorities with thirty-nine blows on five different occasions. Paul did not receive 40 blows, as according to Deu. 25:3 because as a common practice, the Jews only allowed 39 blows to be administered. This was to both show mercy and to scrupulously keep the law - one blow was left off to protect against a miscount.

2. (4) The command to not muzzle the ox.

You shall not muzzle an ox while it treads out *the grain*.

a. **You shall not muzzle an ox:** This law simply commanded the humane treatment of a working animal. In those days, grain would be

broken away from his husk by having an ox walk on it repeatedly (usually around a circle).

It would be cruel for force the ox to walk on all the grain, yet to **muzzle** him so he couldn't eat of it.

b. **You shall not muzzle an ox:** In 1Co. 9:9

and 1Ti. 5:18 Paul applied this principle to the minister's right to be supported by the people the ministers to. In fact, 1Co. 9:9-10 leads us to believe that this is the *real* point God is making in this verse, because in that passage Paul asked, *Is it oxen God is concerned about? Or does He say it altogether for our sakes?*

B. Two laws dealing with family matters.

1. (5-10) The marriage obligation of surviving brothers.

If brothers dwell together, and one of them dies and has no son, the widow of the dead man shall not be *married* to a

stranger outside *the family*; her husband's brother shall go in to her, take her as his wife, and perform the duty of a husband's brother to her. And it shall be *that* the firstborn son which she bears will succeed to the name of his dead brother, that his name may not be blotted out of Israel. But if the man does not want to take his brother's wife, then let his brother's wife go up to the gate to the elders, and say, "My husband's brother refuses to raise up a name to his brother in Israel; he will not perform the duty of my husband's brother." Then the elders of his city shall call him and speak to him. But *if* he stands firm and says, "I do not want to take her," then his brother's wife shall come to him in the presence of the elders, remove his sandal from his foot, spit in his face, and answer and say, "So shall it be done to the man who will not build up his brother's house." And his name shall be called in Israel, "The house of him who had his sandal removed."

a. **One of them dies and has no son:** In ancient Israel it was seen as a great tragedy for a man to die without leaving descendants to carry on his name, and to give his family inheritance to. Therefore, if a man **dies and has no son**, it was the responsibility of one of his brothers to take the deceased brother's widow as a wife, **and perform the duty of a husband's brother to her**.

i. "The practice of levirate marriage . . . was not peculiar to Israel, for it was practiced among the Hittites and Assyrians as well as in countries such as India, Africa and South America." (Thompson)

b. **The firstborn son which she bears will succeed to the name of his dead brother, that his name may not be blotted out of Israel:** When a son was born to this union, it would not be counted as the son of the surviving brother, but as son to

the deceased
brother.

i. **Son** here may simply mean *child*. "In the history of the interpretation of this Deuteronomic law, difference of opinion

existed among Jewish expositors whether *ben* in v.5 meant 'son' or 'child.' The LXX and Josephus render it 'child.' Moses had already established that when no male heir existed, daughters would be heirs or their

father's property (Num. 27:1-8)." (Kalland) c. **He will not perform the duty of my husband's brother:** If the brothers of the deceased man refused to take this responsibility, they were to be called to open shame by the widow. The shame was compounded as they would **remove his**

sandal and the widow would **spit in his face**.

2. (11-12) Wives forbidden to interfere in their husband's fights.

If *two* men fight together, and the wife of one draws near to rescue her husband from the hand of the one attacking him, and puts out her hand and seizes him by the genitals, then you shall cut off her hand; your eye shall not pity *her*.

a. **Then you shall cut off her hand:** In this difficult passage, various suggestions have been made as to why such a severe punishment was commanded. "Possibly it was representative of similar offences and provided a standard for judgment in all such cases. Perhaps also, the law arose from the desire to protect the reproductive organs and thus obviate anything that might prevent a man leaving descendants."

(Thompson)

b. **Your eye shall not pity her:** "Partly because of the great mischief she did to him, both to his person and posterity, and partly to deter all women from immodest and impudent carriages, and to secure that modesty which is

indeed the guardian of all the virtues, as immodesty is an inlet to all vices, as the sad experience of this degenerate age shows; and therefore it is not strange that it is so severely restrained and punished." (Matthew Poole, 1683) C. Two laws commanding justice.

1. (13-16) God commands weights and measures be just.

You shall not have in your bag differing weights, a heavy and a light. You shall not have in your house differing measures, a large and a small.

You shall have a perfect and just weight, a perfect and just measure, that your days may be lengthened in the land which the LORD your God is giving you. For all who do such things, all who behave unrighteously, *are* an abomination to the LORD your God.

2. (17-19) God commands Israel to justly destroy Amalek.

Remember what Amalek did to you on the way as you were coming out of Egypt, how he met you on the way and attacked your rear ranks, all the stragglers at your rear, when you *were* tired and weary; and he did not fear God. Therefore it shall be, when the LORD your God has given you rest from your enemies all around, in the land which the LORD your God is giving you to possess *as* an inheritance, *that* you will blot out the remembrance of Amalek from under heaven. You shall not forget.

a. **Remember what Amalek did:** The

Amalekite attack on the Israelites is recorded in Exodus 17. In response, Joshua led the armies of Israel in victory over the Amalekites as Moses prayed for them, assisted by Aaron and Hur.

b. **Blot out the remembrance of Amalek under heaven:** Because of God's strong

command to battle against Amalek until they were completely conquered, many see the Amalekites as a picture of our flesh - which

constantly battles against the spirit and must be struggled against until completely conquered (Gal. 5:17).

c. When the LORD your God has given you

rest: Israel was to make this war against the Amalekites later, when they were at rest in the land. Some 400 years later, God directed Saul to make war against the Amalekites, and his failure to completely destroy them was the primary act of disobedience which cost Saul the throne (1Sa. 15:2-9; 28:18).

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2 Then, if the guilty person is sentenced to a beating, the judge shall force him to lie down and be beaten in his presence with the number of blows his wicked behavior deserves. **3** The judge may sentence him to forty blows, but no more. If he is struck with more than these, you might view your fellow Israelite with contempt.

4 You must not muzzle your ox when it is treading grain.

5 If brothers live together and one of them dies without having a son, the dead man's wife must not remarry someone outside the family. Instead, her late husband's brother must go to her, marry her, and perform the duty of a brother-in-law. **6** Then the first son she bears will continue the name of the dead brother, thus preventing his name from being blotted out of Israel. **7** But if the man does not want to marry his brother's widow, then she must go to the elders at the town gate and say, "My husband's brother refuses to preserve his brother's name in Israel; he is unwilling to perform the duty of a brother-in-law to me!" **8** Then the elders of his city must summon him and speak to him. If he persists, saying, "I don't want to marry her," **9** then his sister-in-law must approach him in view of the elders, remove his sandal from his foot, and spit in his face. She will then respond, "Thus may it be done to any man who does not maintain his brother's family line!" **10** His family name will be referred to in Israel as "the family of the one whose sandal was removed."

11 If two men get into a hand-to-hand fight, and the wife of one of them gets involved to help her husband against his attacker, and she reaches out her hand and grabs his genitals, **12** then you must cut off her hand – do not pity her.

13 You must not have in your bag different stone weights, a heavy and a light one. **14** You must not have in your house different measuring containers, a large and a small one. **15** You must have an accurate and correct stone weight and an accurate and correct measuring container, so that your life may be extended in the land the LORD your God is about to give you. **16** For anyone who acts dishonestly in these ways is abhorrent to the LORD your God.

17 Remember what the Amalekites did to you on your way from Egypt, **18** how they met you along the way and cut off all your stragglers in the rear of the march when you were exhausted and tired; they were unafraid of God.

19 So when the LORD your God gives you relief from all the enemies who surround you in the land he is giving you as an inheritance, you must wipe out the memory of the Amalekites from under heaven – do not forget!

1 When you enter the land that the LORD your God is giving you as an inheritance, and you occupy it and live in it, Guzik
- Deuteronomy 26:1-19

Deuteronomy 26 - Presenting Firstfruits and

Tithes

A. Instruction for bringing the firstfruits and tithes.

1. (1-4) Bringing the firstfruits to the priest.

And it shall be, when you come into the land which the LORD your God is giving you *as* an inheritance, and you possess it and dwell in it, that you shall take some of the first of all the produce of the ground, which you shall bring from your land that the LORD your God is giving you, and put *it* in a basket and go to the place where the LORD your God chooses to make His name abide. And you shall go to the one who is priest in those days, and say to him, "I declare today to the LORD your God that I have come to the country which the LORD swore to our fathers to give us." Then the priest shall take the basket out of your hand and set it down before the altar of the LORD your God.

a. **When you come into the land:** The Promised Land lay just across the Jordan River, and though there were formidable obstacles (such as a Jordan River swollen by Spring floods and the mighty armies of Canaanites), God still assured them that they will **come into the land**.

b. **Some of the first of all the produce of the ground:** Num. 18:12 speaks of the firstfruits that must be regularly brought to the priests, but the firstfruits described here in Deuteronomy 26 seem to be a special offering of firstfruits, from the first of the harvest they gain in the Promised Land.

c. **Set it down before the altar of the LORD**

your God: Firstfruit giving obviously honored the LORD, because it gave the LORD His portion off the top, before any was used for one's self.

2. (5-10) The words of thanks and praise at the giving of firstfruits.

And you shall answer and say before the LORD

your God: "My father *was* a Syrian, about to perish, and he went down to Egypt and dwelt there, few in number; and there he became a nation, great, mighty, and populous. But the Egyptians mistreated us, afflicted us, and laid hard bondage on us. Then we cried out to the LORD God of our fathers, and the LORD heard our voice and looked on our affliction and our labor and our oppression. So the LORD brought us out of Egypt with a mighty hand and with an outstretched arm, with great terror and with signs and wonders. He has brought us to this place and has given us this land, 'a land flowing with milk and honey'; and now, behold, I have brought the firstfruits of the land which you, O LORD, have given me." Then you shall set it before the LORD your God, and worship before the LORD your God.

a. And you shall answer and say before

the LORD your God: This wonderful

confession of thanks remembered the history of Israel from the time of Jacob and his family in the land of Canaan, to the family's going down into Egypt, and to the eventual deliverance and Exodus into the Promised Land.

b. He went down to Egypt and sojourned

there: Israel spent some 400 years in Egypt.

Yet in the course of God's eternal plan, it was nothing more than a *sojourn*. We can often focus so much on our own time of trial or misery that we think that it defines our whole life; God saw Israel's experience in Egypt as a *sojourn*.

c. Few in number; and there he became a nation, great, mighty, and populous: This was the major reason God had for sending Jacob and his family on their sojourn in Egypt.

When they lived in Canaan, there was great risk of the family just assimilating with the wicked, pagan peoples around them. To prevent this, and to allow the nation to

grow, God sent them down to Egypt, which was a very racist society, and who would not intermarry with Israel.

Therefore, they could go down there **few in number; and there he became a nation, great, mighty, and populous.**

d. **And now, behold, I have brought the**

firstfruits of the land: This initial giving of firstfruits when Israel came into the Promised Land was an appropriate way to say "thank you"

to the LORD. This giving, and all giving done with the right heart, is a proper way to **worship before the LORD your God.**

3. (11) **So you shall rejoice.**

So you shall rejoice in every good *thing* which the LORD your God has given to you and your house, you and the Levite and the stranger who *is* among you.

a. **Rejoice in every good thing which the LORD your God has given to you:** When we receive from the LORD, and give back to Him, it makes us rejoice. It is the proper response of a creature to his Creator, who has supplied him with all good things.

4. (12-15) The prayer for the giving of the tithe.

When you have finished laying aside all the tithe of your increase in the third year; the year of tithing; and have given *it* to the Levite, the stranger, the fatherless, and the widow, so that they may eat within your gates and be filled, then you shall say before the LORD your God: "I have removed the holy *tithe* from *my* house, and also have given them to the Levite, the stranger, the fatherless, and the widow, according to all Your commandments which You have commanded me; I have not transgressed Your commandments,

nor have I forgotten *them*. I have not eaten any of it when in mourning, nor have I removed *any* of it for an unclean *use*, nor given *any* of it for the dead. I have obeyed the voice of the LORD

my God, and have done according to all that You have commanded me. Look down from Your holy habitation, from heaven, and bless Your people Israel and the land which You have given us, just as You swore to our fathers, 'a land flowing with milk and honey.' "

a. **When you have finished laying aside all the tithe:**

The **tithe** was required of Israel every year, but every **third year**, the tithe was given not only to the Levites for their support (as was instructed in Num. 18:21-24), but was to be shared by **the Levite, the stranger, the fatherless, and the widow, so they may eat within your gates and be filled.**

b. **Then you shall say:** The prayer described here shows that the giving was done with the right kind of heart. God not only wants us to give, but to give with the right heart.

i. Right giving is done according to God's

Word: **According to all Your**

commandments which you have

commanded me.

ii. Right giving is done within the context of a whole life of obedience: **I have not transgressed Your commandments, nor have I forgotten them.**

iii. **I have not eaten any of it . . . nor have I removed any of it:** Right giving genuinely sets aside what is to be given unto the LORD.

iv. **Nor given any of it for the dead:**

Right giving is not done superstitiously;

"Putting food in a grave with a dead body was a common Egyptian and Canaanite

practice, which is most likely what the

Israelites were not to emulate." (Kalland) v. **Look down from Your holy**

habitation, from heaven, and bless

Your people: Right giving is done with the expectation of blessing.

B. Moses' exhortation to Israel.

1. (16) A call to complete obedience.

This day the LORD your God commands you to observe these statutes and judgments; therefore you shall be careful to observe them with all your heart and with all your soul.

a. **This day the LORD your God commands you to observe these statutes and**

judgments: Deu. 4:1 began this long section with the words *Now, O Israel, list to the statutes and the judgments which I teach you to observe.* From Deuteronomy chapter 4 through chapter 26, Moses has reminded Israel of God's commands. Now he exhorted them to

keep the commands.

b. therefore you shall be careful to

observe them: Sometimes we need to be

instructed regarding the law of God; sometimes we need to be *reminded* regarding the law of God. But most often, we need to be *exhorted* regarding the law of God. We know what to do, but we need to be encouraged to actually *do it*.

2. (17) Israel's proclamation.

Today you have proclaimed the LORD to be your

God, and that you will walk in His ways and keep His statutes, His commandments, and His judgments, and that you will obey His voice.

a. Today you have proclaimed the LORD to

be your God: Israel was to proclaim two things. First, that **the LORD to be their God.**

Second, that they **will walk in His ways and keep His statutes.** The two go together, because the identity of our God is always demonstrated by the direction of our obedience.

3. (18-19) God's proclamation.

Also today the LORD has proclaimed you to be

His special people, just as He promised you, that *you* should keep all His commandments, and that He will set you high above all nations which He has made, in praise, in name, and in honor, and that you may be a holy people to the LORD your God, just as He has spoken.

a. The LORD has proclaimed you to be His

special people: Israel's obedience to the LORD

would be more than rewarded. God promised that He exalt an obedient Israel, to set them

high above all nations which He has made, in praise, in name, and in honor.

© 2006 David Guzik - No distribution beyond personal use without permission **2** you must take the first of all the ground's produce you harvest from the land the LORD your God is giving you, place it in a basket, and go to the place

where he chooses to locate his name. **3** You must go to the priest in office at that time and say to him, "I declare today to the LORD

your God that I have come into the land that the LORD promised to our ancestors to give us." **4** The priest will then take the basket from you and set it before the altar of the LORD your God. **5** Then you must affirm before the LORD YOUR GOD, "A wandering Aramean was my ancestor, and he went down to Egypt and lived there as a foreigner with a household few in number, but there he became a great, powerful, and numerous people. **6** But the Egyptians mistreated and oppressed us, forcing us to do burdensome labor. **7** So we cried out to the LORD, the God of our ancestors, and he heard us and saw our humiliation, toil, and oppression. **8** Therefore the LORD brought us out of Egypt with tremendous strength and power, as well as with great awe-inspiring signs and wonders. **9** Then he brought us to this place and gave us this land, a land flowing with milk and honey. **10** So now, look! I have brought the first of the ground's produce that you, LORD, have given me." Then you must set it down before the LORD your God and worship before him. **11** You will celebrate all the good things that the LORD your God has given you and your family, along with the Levites and the resident foreigners among you.

12 When you finish tithing all your income in the third year (the year of tithing), you must give it to the Levites, the resident foreigners, the orphans, and the widows so that they may eat to their satisfaction in your villages. **13**

Then you shall say before the LORD your God, "I have removed the sacred offering from my house and given it to the Levites, the resident foreigners, the orphans, and the widows just as you have commanded me. I have not violated or forgotten your commandments. **14** I have not eaten anything when I was in mourning, or removed any of it while ceremonially unclean, or offered any of it to the dead; I have obeyed you and have done everything you have

commanded me. **15** Look down from your holy dwelling place in heaven and bless your people Israel and the land you have given us, just as you promised our ancestors - a land flowing with milk and honey."

16 Today the LORD your God is commanding you to keep these statutes and ordinances, something you must do with all your heart and soul. **17** Today you have declared the LORD to be your God, and that you will walk in his ways, keep his statutes, commandments, and ordinances, and obey him. **18** And today the LORD has declared you to be his special people (as he already promised you) so you may keep all his commandments. **19**

Then he will elevate you above all the nations he has made and you will receive praise, fame, and honor. You will be a people holy to the LORD your God, as he has said.

1 Then Moses and the elders of Israel commanded the people: "Pay attention to all the commandments I am giving you today.

Guzik - Deuteronomy 27:1-26

Deuteronomy 27 - Stones of Witness

A. A special altar.

1. (1-8) The command to set up a special altar.

Now Moses, with the elders of Israel, commanded the people, saying: "Keep all the commandments which I command you today.

And it shall be, on the day when you cross over the Jordan to the land which the LORD your God is giving you, that you shall set up for yourselves large stones, and whitewash them with lime. You shall write on them all the words of this law, when you have crossed over, that you may enter the land which the LORD your God is giving you, 'a land flowing with milk and honey,' just as the LORD God of your fathers promised you.

Therefore it shall be, when you have crossed over the Jordan, *that* on Mount Ebal you shall set up these stones, which I

command you today, and you shall whitewash them with lime. And there

you shall build an altar to the LORD your God, an altar of stones; you shall not use an iron *tool* on them. You shall build with whole stones the altar of the LORD your God, and offer burnt offerings on it to the LORD your God. You shall offer peace offerings, and shall eat there, and rejoice before the LORD your God. And you shall write very plainly on the stones all the words of this law."

a. Keep all the commandments which I

command you today: Moses finished his

preaching to the people of Israel, so there was nothing more to say, other than the simple

encouragement to *do* what God commanded. It isn't enough for Israel to be hearers of the word; they must also be *doers* of the word.

b. There you shall build an altar: When Israel came into the Promised Land, they were to build a special altar. It was to be made of natural stone, with no **iron tool** used to carve the stones. With these **whole stones** making up the altar, they were also to **write very plainly on the stones all the words of this law**.

i. This was a special altar. It was clearly to be used for sacrifice (**You shall offer peace offerings**), but it was also to be a memorial of the law of Moses, and his great sermon to Israel in the book of

Deuteronomy.

ii. This command was obeyed by Joshua in

Jos. 8:30-32; there, at **Mount Ebal**, in the Promised Land, Joshua *in the presence of the children of Israel . . . wrote on the*

stones a copy of the law of Moses, which he had written.

iii. Probably, what was written was the summation of the law contained in the Ten Commandments.

c. **An altar of stones; you shall not use an iron tool on them:** This was commanded because God did not want the glory of the stone carver to be the center of attention at His altar.

God, at His altar, will share glory with no man - the beauty and attractiveness would be found only in the provision of God, not in any fleshly display.

d. **You shall whitewash them with lime:** So the words could be easily seen, they were to **whitewash them with lime**. Anything we can do to make God's word more accessible to others is a good thing, as long as the integrity of God's word is preserved.

i. Any time God's word is presented, it must be presented **very plainly**. Every preacher and teacher must endeavor to make the Word of God plain.

2. (9-10) **This day you have become the people of the LORD your God.**

Then Moses and the priests, the Levites, spoke to all Israel, saying, "Take heed and listen, O Israel: This day you have become the people of the LORD your God. Therefore you shall obey the

voice of the LORD your God, and observe His commandments and His statutes which I command you today."

a. **Then Moses and the priests, the Levites, spoke to all Israel:** Much of the book of Deuteronomy is written after the same pattern as ancient agreements between kings and their

subjects. Here, the idea is clear: God is the king, and the people of Israel are His subjects. He has told them what He expects of them, and what they may expect from Him.

b. **This day you have become the people of the LORD your God:** Now that the agreement was settled and this could be said to Israel. The contract was signed and Israel willingly submitted itself to the LORD God, recognizing

Him as their king.

c. You shall obey the voice of the LORD your God, and observe His

commandments and His statutes: If the

LORD is our king, then it is fitting that we obey Him this way. Moses, and all the leadership of Israel simply declared a fact that was obvious to everyone.

B. The command to announce the curses from Mount Ebal.

1. (11-13) The division of the tribes between the two mountains.

And Moses commanded the people on the same day, saying, "These shall stand on Mount Gerizim to bless the people, when you have crossed over the Jordan: Simeon, Levi, Judah, Issachar, Joseph, and Benjamin; and these shall stand on Mount Ebal to curse: Reuben, Gad, Asher, Zebulun, Dan, and Naphtali."

a. These shall stand on Mount Gerizim . . .

and these shall stand on Mount Ebal: When Israel came into the Promised Land, they were to separate the tribes according to these two

groups. One group would gather on **Mount Gerizim**, and they would **bless the people**.

The other group would stand on **Mount Ebal**

and they would **curse** those who disobeyed the law of God.

b. To bless the people . . . to curse: This dramatic scene was fulfilled in Jos. 8:32-35. In Joshua's day, it happened after a bitter defeat, then a dramatic repentance and recovery at Ai (Joshua chapters 7 and 8). After the victory at Ai, Joshua wanted to do everything he could to walk in obedience, so he led the nation in obedience to this command in Deuteronomy 27.

i. In this, Joshua was showing himself to be a man of the Book, and Israel a people of the Book; they would order their lives after God's Word. This was done even at some cost or inconvenience; the distance from Ai

to Ebal and Gerizim was not small distance to move all the tribes of Israel (from 20 to 25 miles).

ii. The rest of the chapter declares the curses; but where is the declaration of blessing? "The absence of a list of blessings may simply mean that they were omitted, since they would have corresponded with the curses except that they negated everyone in turn. Those who were blessed did not offend in the areas in which those who were cursed did." (Thompson)

c. These shall stand on Mount Gerizim . . .

and these shall stand on Mount Ebal: God commanded this "open-air-audience-participation-sermon" to happen at **Mount Gerizim** and **Mount Ebal** for several important reasons.

i. This would be a beautiful place to do this. The whole nation could hear this reading of the Law, because the area has a natural amphitheater effect because of the contour of the hills.

ii. Because Gerizim and Ebal were in the geographic middle of the Promised Land, Israel had to control the middle of Canaan and the highlands to have the luxury of such an assembly at these mountains.

iii. Finally, the mountains themselves were pictures of blessing and cursing: "On all hands it is allowed that *Gerizim* abounds with springs, gardens, and orchards, and that it is covered with a beautiful verdure, while *Ebal* is as *naked* and barren as a rock." (Clarke)

2. (14-26) The declaration of the curses.

And the Levites shall speak with a loud voice and say to all the men of Israel: "Cursed *is* the one who makes a carved or

molded image, an abomination to the LORD, the work of the hands of the craftsman, and sets *it* up in secret." And all the people shall answer and say, "Amen!"

"Cursed *is* the one who treats his father or his mother with contempt." And all the people shall say, "Amen!" "Cursed *is* the one who moves his neighbor's landmark." And all the people shall say, "Amen!" "Cursed *is* the one who makes the blind to wander off the road." And all the people shall say, "Amen!" "Cursed *is* the one who perverts the justice due the stranger, the fatherless, and widow." And all the people shall say, "Amen!" "Cursed *is* the one who lies with his father's wife, because he has uncovered his father's bed." And all the people shall say,

"Amen!" "Cursed *is* the one who lies with any kind of animal." And all the people shall say, "Amen!" "Cursed *is* the one who lies with his sister, the daughter of his father or the daughter of his mother." And all the people shall say, "Amen!" "Cursed *is* the one who lies with his mother-in-law." And all the people shall say, "Amen!" "Cursed *is* the one who attacks his neighbor secretly." And all the people shall say, "Amen!" "Cursed *is* the one who takes a bribe to slay an innocent person." And all the people shall say, "Amen!" "Cursed *is* the one who does not confirm *all* the words of this law." And all the people shall say, "Amen!"

a. The Levites shall speak with a loud

voice: This would make a remarkable impression. The Levites declared curses upon those who break the covenant, and people answered **Amen!** to every declaration.

i. It is good to remind ourselves that the word **Amen!** *means* something. It means "so be it." Every **Amen!** was a conscious agreement with the declaration of a curse.

b. **Cursed is the one who:** he Levites declare, and the people agree to, curses upon those who break God's law.

i. Curses upon idolaters (**the one who**

makes any carved or molded image).

ii. Curses upon those who dishonor their parents (**the one who treats his father or his mother with contempt**).

iii. Curses upon those who steal (**the one who moves his neighbor's landmark**).

iv. Curses upon those who are simply cruel (**the one who makes the blind to wander off the road**).

v. Curses upon **the one who perverts the justice due the stranger, the fatherless, and widow**.

vi. Curses upon those who disobey God's sexual standards (regarding incest and bestiality).

vii. Curses upon the violent (**the one who attacks his neighbor secretly**).

viii. Curses upon those who cheat the courts (**the one who takes a bribe to slay an innocent person**).

c. Cursed is the one who does not confirm

all the words of this law: Finally - if one believes they have escaped these curses - there was a curse pronounced upon **the one who does not conform to all the words of this**

law. Even if somehow we have escaped all the previous curses, none can **conform to all the words of this law**.

i. When all are found guilty before the law, and it is clear that they cannot **conform to all the words of this law**, there is still hope. A clue to this hope is found in the beginning of the chapter, where God declared that an altar be built - not upon Mount Gerizim, the mountain of blessing, but upon Mount Ebal, the mountain of cursing. We need the covering and atoning sacrifice exactly at the point where our sin

and failures are revealed and God's curse is pronounced on our sin.

ii. It is important to recognize that we, in Jesus Christ, do not have an Old Covenant relationship with God. We expect to be blessed, not because of our obedience, but because of our position in Jesus. The curse we deserved was laid upon Him (Gal. 3:10-14). Though there may be an inherent curse of consequences in our disobedience, or even the correcting hand of God, under the New Covenant, He does not punish us or curse us - because all that we deserved, past, present, and future, was poured out upon Jesus.

© 2006 David Guzik - No distribution beyond personal use without permission **2** When you cross the Jordan River to the land the LORD

your God is giving you, you must erect great stones and cover them with plaster. **3** Then you must inscribe on them all the words of this law when you cross over, so that you may enter the land the LORD your God is giving you, a land flowing with milk and honey just as the LORD, the God of your ancestors, said to you. **4** So when you cross the Jordan you must erect on Mount Ebal these stones about which I am commanding you today, and you must cover them with plaster. **5** Then you must build an altar there to the LORD your God, an altar of stones - do not use an iron tool on them. **6** You must build the altar of the LORD your God with whole stones and offer burnt offerings on it to the LORD your God. **7** Also you must offer fellowship offerings and eat them there, rejoicing before the LORD your God. **8** You must inscribe on the stones all the words of this law, making them clear."

9 Then Moses and the Levitical priests spoke to all Israel: "Be quiet and pay attention, Israel. Today you have become

the people of the LORD your God. **10** You must obey him and keep his commandments and statutes that I am giving you today.” **11** Moreover, Moses commanded the people that day: **12** “The following tribes must stand to bless the people on Mount Gerizim when you cross the Jordan: Simeon, Levi, Judah, Issachar, Joseph, and Benjamin. **13** And these other tribes must stand for the curse on Mount Ebal: Reuben, Gad, Asher, Zebulun, Dan, and Naphtali.

14 “The Levites will call out to every Israelite with a loud voice: **15** ‘Cursed is the one who makes a carved or metal image – something abhorrent to the LORD, the work of the craftsman – and sets it up in a secret place.’ Then all the people will say, ‘Amen!’ **16** ‘Cursed is the one who disrespects his father and mother.’ Then all the people will say, ‘Amen!’ **17** ‘Cursed is the one who moves his neighbor’s boundary marker.’ Then all the people will say, ‘Amen!’ **18** ‘Cursed is the one who misleads a blind person on the road.’ Then all the people will say, ‘Amen!’ **19**

‘Cursed is the one who perverts justice for the resident foreigner, the orphan, and the widow.’ Then all the people will say, ‘Amen!’ **20** ‘Cursed is the one who has sexual relations with his father’s former wife, for he dishonors his father.’ Then all the people will say, ‘Amen!’ **21** ‘Cursed is the one who commits bestiality.’ Then all the people will say, ‘Amen!’ **22** ‘Cursed is the one who has sexual relations with his sister, the daughter of either his father or mother.’

Then all the people will say, ‘Amen!’ **23** ‘Cursed is the one who has sexual relations with his mother-in-law.’ Then all the people will say, ‘Amen!’ **24** ‘Cursed is the one who kills his neighbor in private.’ Then all the people will say, ‘Amen!’ **25** ‘Cursed is the one who takes a bribe to kill an innocent person.’ Then all the people will say, ‘Amen!’ **26**

‘Cursed is the one who refuses to keep the words of this law.’ Then all the people will say, ‘Amen!’

1 “If you indeed obey the LORD your God and are careful to observe all his commandments I am giving you today, the

LORD your God will elevate you above all the nations of the earth.

Guzik - Deuteronomy 28:1-68

Deuteronomy 28 - Blessing and Cursing

A. Blessings on obedience.

1. (1-2) Overtaken by blessing.

Now it shall come to pass, if you diligently obey the voice of the LORD your God, to observe carefully all His commandments which I command you today, that the LORD your God will set you high above all nations of the earth. And all these blessings shall come upon you and overtake you, because you obey the voice of the LORD your God:

a. **If you diligently obey the voice of the**

LORD: The word " **if**" looms large. In this chapter, Moses exhorted the nation with *choice*.

The covenant God made with Israel contained three major features: The *law*, the *sacrifice*, and the *choice*.

i. The idea behind the *choice* is that God was determined to reveal Himself to the world through Israel. He would do this either by

making them so blessed that the world would know only God could have blessed them so; or by making them so cursed that only God could have cursed them and cause them to still survive. The choice was up to Israel.

ii. As a literary form, this chapter is similar to ancient treaties between a king and his people; this is God the King, making a covenant with His people, Israel.

iii. "In the ancient Near East it was customary for legal treaties to conclude with passages containing blessings upon those who observed the enactments, and curses upon those who did not." (Harrison)

b. That the LORD your God will set you high above all nations of the earth:

Therefore, if Israel would obey the LORD, He would **set** them **high above all nations of the earth**, and the blessings would be so powerful that they would **come upon you and overtake you**. They wouldn't be able to *escape* the blessings.

2. (3-14) God will richly bless Israel's obedience to the covenant.

Blessed *shall you be* in the city, and blessed *shall you be* in the country. Blessed *shall be* the fruit of your body, the produce of your ground and the increase of your herds, the increase of your cattle and the offspring of your flocks. Blessed *shall be* your basket and your kneading bowl. Blessed *shall you be* when you come in, and blessed *shall you be* when you go out. The LORD will cause your enemies who rise against you to be defeated before your face; they shall come out against you one way and flee before you seven

ways. The LORD will command the blessing on you in your storehouses and in all to which you set your hand, and He will bless you in the land which the LORD your God is giving you. The LORD will establish you as a holy people to

Himself, just as He has sworn to you, if you keep the commandments of the LORD your God and walk in His ways. Then all peoples of the earth shall see that you are called by the name of the LORD, and they shall be afraid of you. And the LORD will grant you plenty of goods, in the fruit of your body, in the increase of your livestock, and in the produce of your ground, in the land of which the LORD swore to your fathers to give you. The LORD will open to you His good

treasure, the heavens, to give the rain to your land in its season, and to bless all the work of your hand. You shall lend to many nations, but you shall not borrow. And the LORD will

make you the head and not the tail; you shall be above only, and not be beneath, if you heed the commandments of the LORD your God, which I command you today, and are careful to observe *them*. So you shall not turn aside from any of the words which I command you this day, *to* the right or the left, to go after other gods to serve them.

a. **Blessed shall you be:** An obedient Israel would be blessed everywhere: **In the city . . .**

in the country . . . when you come in . . .

when you go out. An obedient Israel would be blessed in their homes and in their farms, and in their kitchens (**the fruit of your body . . . the produce of your ground and the increase of your herds . . . Blessed shall be your**

basket and your kneading bowl).

b. **They shall come out against you one way and flee before you seven ways:** An

obedient Israel would be blessed in warfare.

This degree of blessing speaks of a clearly Divine blessing.

c. **The LORD will establish you as a holy**

people to Himself: Perhaps the best blessing had to do with Israel's own relationship with God. God would separate and obedient Israel

unto Himself, speaking of a special relationship.

If not for this, all the material blessings described previously would be empty.

d. **All the peoples of the earth shall see**

that you are called by the name of the

LORD . . . the LORD will make you the

head and not the tail; you shall be above

only, and not be beneath: God's purpose in blessing Israel was greater than just enriching the nation for its own sake. He intended to glorify Himself through blessing them.

i. When Israel walked after the LORD, these

blessings were real; one example of this is when the Queen of Sheba came to Solomon and saw a nation so blessed, she knew it had to be of God (1Ki. 10:1-13).

B. Curses on disobedience.

1. (15) Introduction to the curses.

But it shall come to pass, if you do not obey the voice of the LORD your God, to observe carefully all His commandments and His statutes which I command you today, that all these curses will

come upon you and overtake you:

a. **If you do not obey the voice of the**

LORD your God: The covenant's aspect of the *choice* was a sword with two edges. Obedience would carry great blessing, but disobedience would carry terrible curses.

b. **All these curses will come upon you and**

overtake you: Like the blessings for an obedient Israel, the curses for a disobedient Israel would be inevitable.

c. **All these curses:** The rest of the chapter is almost overwhelming. "Actually, a logical analysis of the chapter is almost impossible, since the final aim was not to be logical but to build up a vivid impression by presenting picture after picture until the hearer could see and feel the import of the preacher's words." (Thompson)

2. (16-68) The curses upon Israel's disobedience.

Cursed *shall you be* in the city, and cursed *shall you be* in the country. Cursed *shall be* your basket and your kneading bowl. Cursed *shall be* the fruit of your body and the produce of your land, the increase of your cattle and the offspring of your flocks. Cursed *shall you be* when you come in, and cursed *shall you be* when you go out. The LORD will send on you cursing, confusion, and rebuke in all that you set your hand to do, until you are destroyed and until you perish quickly, because of the wickedness of your doings in which you have forsaken Me. The LORD

will make the plague cling to you until He has consumed you from the land which you are going to possess. The LORD will strike you with consumption, with fever, with inflammation, with severe burning fever, with the sword, with scorching, and with mildew; they shall pursue you until you perish. And your heavens which *are* over your head shall be bronze, and the earth which is under you *shall be* iron. The LORD will change the rain of your land to powder and dust; from the heaven it shall come down on you until you are destroyed. The LORD will cause you to be defeated before your enemies; you shall go out one way against them and flee seven ways before them; and you shall become troublesome to all the kingdoms of the earth. Your carcasses shall be food for all the birds of the air and the beasts of the earth, and no one shall frighten *them* away. The LORD will strike you with the boils of Egypt, with tumors, with the scab, and with the itch, from which you cannot be healed. The LORD will strike you with madness and blindness and confusion of heart. And you shall grope at noonday, as a blind man gropes in darkness; you shall not prosper in your ways; you shall be only oppressed and plundered continually, and no one shall save *you*. You shall betroth a wife, but another man shall lie with her; you shall build a house, but you shall not dwell in it; you shall plant a vineyard, but shall not gather its grapes. Your ox *shall be* slaughtered before your eyes, but you shall not eat of it; your donkey *shall be* violently taken away from before you, and shall not be restored to you; your sheep *shall be* given to your enemies, and you shall have no one to rescue *them*. Your sons and your daughters *shall be* given to another people, and your eyes shall look and fail *with longing* for them all day long; and *there shall be* no strength in your hand. A nation whom you have not known shall eat the fruit

of your land and the produce of your labor, and you shall be only oppressed and crushed continually. So you shall be driven mad because of the sight which your eyes see. The LORD will strike you in the knees and on the legs with severe boils which cannot be healed, and from the sole of your foot to the top of your head. The LORD will bring you and the king whom you set over you to a nation which neither you nor your fathers have known, and there you shall serve other gods; wood and stone. And you shall become an astonishment, a proverb, and a byword among all nations where the LORD will drive you. You shall carry much seed out to the field but gather little in, for the locust shall consume it. You shall plant vineyards and tend *them*, but you shall neither drink *of* the wine nor gather the *grapes*; for the worms shall eat them. You shall have olive trees throughout all your territory, but you shall not anoint *yourself* with the oil; for your olives shall drop off. You shall beget sons and daughters, but they shall not be yours; for they shall go into captivity.

Locusts shall consume all your trees and the produce of your land. The alien who *is* among you shall rise higher and higher above you, and you shall come down lower and lower. He shall lend to you, but you shall not lend to him; he shall be the head, and you shall be the tail.

Moreover all these curses shall come upon you and pursue and overtake you, until you are destroyed, because you did not obey the voice of the LORD your God, to keep His commandments and His statutes which He commanded you. And they shall be upon you for a sign and a wonder, and on your descendants forever. Because you did not serve the LORD your God with joy and gladness of heart, for the abundance of everything, therefore you shall serve your

enemies, whom the LORD will send against you, in hunger, in thirst, in nakedness, and in need of everything; and He will put a yoke of iron on your neck until He has destroyed you. The LORD will bring a nation against you from afar, from the end of the earth, *as swift* as the eagle flies, a nation whose language you will not understand, a nation of fierce countenance, which does not respect the elderly nor show favor to the young.

And they shall eat the increase of your livestock and the produce of your land, until you are

destroyed; they shall not leave you grain or new wine or oil, *or* the increase of your cattle or the offspring of your flocks, until they have destroyed you. They shall besiege you at all your gates until your high and fortified walls, in which you trust, come down throughout all your land; and they shall besiege you at all your gates throughout all your land which the LORD your God has given

you. You shall eat the fruit of your own body, the flesh of your sons and your daughters whom the LORD your God has given you, in the siege and desperate straits in which your enemy shall

distress you. The sensitive and very refined man among you will be hostile toward his brother,

toward the wife of his bosom, and toward the

rest of his children whom he leaves behind, so that he will not give any of them the flesh of his children whom he will eat, because he has nothing left in the siege and desperate straits in which your enemy shall distress you at all your gates. The tender and delicate woman among you, who would not venture to set the sole of her foot on the ground because of her delicateness and sensitivity, will refuse to the husband of her bosom, and to her son and her daughter, her placenta which comes out from between her feet and her children whom she bears; for she will eat them secretly for lack of everything in the siege and desperate straits in which your enemy shall distress you at all your gates. If you

do not carefully observe all the words of this law that are written in this book, that you may fear this glorious and awesome name, THE LORD YOUR

GOD, then the LORD will bring upon you and your descendants extraordinary plagues; great and prolonged plagues; and serious and prolonged sicknesses. Moreover He will bring back on you all the diseases of Egypt, of which you were afraid, and they shall cling to you. Also every sickness and every plague, which *is* not written in this Book of the Law, will the LORD

bring upon you until you are destroyed. You shall be left few in number, whereas you were as the stars of heaven in multitude, because you would not obey the voice of the LORD your God. And it shall be, *that* just as the LORD rejoiced over you to do you good and multiply you, so the LORD

will rejoice over you to destroy you and bring you to nothing; and you shall be plucked from off the land which you go to possess. Then the LORD

will scatter you among all peoples, from one end of the earth to the other, and there you shall serve other gods, which neither you nor your fathers have known; wood and stone. And among

those nations you shall find no rest, nor shall the sole of your foot have a resting place; but there the LORD will give you a trembling heart, failing eyes, and anguish of soul. Your life shall hang in doubt before you; you shall fear day and night, and have no assurance of life. In the morning you shall say, "Oh, that it were evening!" And at evening you shall say, "Oh, that it were

morning!" because of the fear which terrifies your heart, and because of the sight which your eyes see. And the LORD will take you back to Egypt in ships, by the way of which I said to you, "You shall never see it again." And there you shall be

offered for sale to your enemies as male and female slaves, but no one will buy *you*.

a. **In the city . . . in the country . . . when you come in . . . when you go out:** A disobedient Israel would be cursed everywhere.

b. **The fruit of your body . . . the produce of your ground and the increase of your herds . . . Cursed shall be your basket and your kneading bowl:** A disobedient Israel would be cursed in their homes, their farms, and in their kitchens.

c. **Plague . . . consumption . . . fever . . . the boils of Egypt . . . the scab . . . the itch . . . madness and blindness and confusion of heart:** A disobedient Israel would be cursed in their health.

d. **Your heavens . . . shall be bronze . . . the LORD will change the rain of your land to powder and dust:** A disobedient Israel would be cursed in their weather.

e. **To be defeated before your enemies:** A disobedient Israel would be cursed in warfare.

f. **You shall betroth a wife, but another man shall lie with her . . . Your ox shall be slaughtered before your eyes, but you shall not eat of it . . . Your sons and your daughters shall be given to another people:** A disobedient Israel would be cursed by simple, terrible injustices and tragedies. All of these tragedies would bring a terrible result: **you shall be driven mad because of the sight which your eyes see.**

g. **The LORD will bring a nation against you from afar:** A disobedient Israel would be attacked and conquered by **a nation of fierce countenance**, and they would fight **until they have destroyed you.**

i. **You shall eat the fruit of your own body:** This became horribly true in the days of the later kingdom. 2Ki. 6:24-30 describes a famine so severe in a besieged Israelite

city that there was a fight between two women over eating their children! A terrible fulfillment of the promise, **he will not give any of the flesh of his children whom he will eat.** Lam. 4:1-11 vividly describes the horrors of the siege of Jerusalem.

h. The LORD will scatter you among all the peoples, from one end of the earth to the other: In the end, Israel would be dispersed.

We find that because of their disobedience, these curses became the history of the nation of Israel.

i. Of course, many of these horrible curses upon a disobedient Israel were fulfilled in the years of history recorded in the Old Testament; but their fulfillment did not end with the end of Bible history, Old or New Testament.

ii. For example, around 68 A.D. the Romans finally had enough of the rebellious Jews in their province of Judea, so they laid siege to Jerusalem. At the time, the Jews fervently expected the coming of the Messiah to save them and conquer the Romans, based on God's promise to destroy the armies laying siege to Jerusalem in Zec. 12:1-9. Sadly, the Jews of that time refused to fulfill Zec. 12:10 which described their humble, repentant embrace of a pierced Messiah.

ii. Nevertheless the Jews of that day were so confident of Messiah's coming that their factions actually fought each other and burned each other's food, trying to be the most powerful group when the Messiah came. According to Josephus, it was "as though they were purposely serving the Romans by destroying what the city had provided against a siege and severing the

sinews of their own strength" (*Wars* 5.24).

"Through famine certainly the city fell, a fate which would have been practically impossible, had they not prepared the way for it themselves." (*Wars* 5.26)

iii. When the Roman general Vespasian came to Jerusalem, the Jewish factions were busy fighting each other. His staff urged him to attack immediately, but he knew that an attack would instantly unite the Jews. So he held back and let them destroy each other for as long as possible. He said that God was a better general than he, and that He was delivering the Jews into the hands of the Romans. Before Jerusalem was attacked, Vespasian became emperor, and he put his son Titus in charge of the attack.

iv. In contrast, Christians in Jerusalem heeded the words of Jesus in Luk. 21:20-24, in which He told people to flee Jerusalem when it was *surrounded by armies*, because *the days of vengeance* were at hand.

v. In this siege of Jerusalem hunger became so great that many tried to escape the walls and forage for food. Five hundred or more were captured and crucified daily. "The soldiers out of rage and hatred amused themselves by nailing their prisoners in different postures; and so great was their numbers, that space could not be found for the crosses nor crosses for the bodies." (*War* 5.451) More than 600,000 died from starvation, and their dead bodies were dumped over the walls of the city. In total more than a million died and 97,000 were captured, with most of the captives being

shipped as slaves to Egypt. The promise of Deu. 28:68 was tragically fulfilled: **you shall be offered for sale to your enemies as male and female slaves, but no one will**

buy you. This happened as too many Jewish slaves glutted the Egyptian slave market, and no one could buy all the available slaves.

vi. After the conquest the Jews still living in Judea were continually subjugated and humiliated by the Romans. The Romans continued to collect the temple tax from the Jews, even though their temple had been completely destroyed. So the Romans took the temple tax and used it to support their *pagan* temples.

vii. After some years of this, the Jews of Judea rebelled against the Romans again in 132 A.D. with a man named bar-Kochoba leading the fight. He was proclaimed messiah by the rabbis who supported the revolt. But after the bar-Kochoba rebellion, Rome finally and utterly crushed the Jewish population of Judea. Josephus said that as a result of the many battles, the once beautiful land was destroyed, and that it could not even be recognized.

viii. But the curse for Israel had not ended. Now, tragically, the church and Christians turned on the Jews. It was as if the branches of the tree attacked their own root. As the church gained in political power and became the official religion of the Roman Empire, the decided to attack the Jews.

ix. They did this in part as retribution for the distant early years of Jewish persecution of

the Christians. It was also because the current Jewish rejection of Jesus as Messiah was thought so offensive. But the greatest motivation was a bizarre evangelistic strategy. Christians thought, "The Jews are cursed because they have killed their Messiah. The curses are meant to turn the heart of the nation back to God. We will help God by being His instrument to curse the Jewish people."

x. For centuries, the worst enemies Jews ever had were the Christians who thought they could help God by cursing the Jewish people. At one time in Medieval Rome, the Pope commanded a procession of the Jews through the city, where they presented a scroll of the Old Testament to the Pope. He received the scroll and said, "Beautiful law; wretched people." The shameful history of the Church against the Jews is recorded in the story of the Crusades, the slaughters, and the ghettos.

xi. This helps to explain the great corruption and lack of spiritual power in the church through the Dark Ages. God promised to Abraham and his covenant descendants, the Jewish people, *I will bless those who bless you, and curse him who curses you* (Gen.

12:3). Satan's clever, and powerful strategy to *curse* the church was effective: Curse the church by inspiring them to curse the Jewish people. Just as God judged Assyria, Babylon, Rome, and Germany for their mistreatment of the Jewish people, so the church was cursed as long as it persecuted the Jews. The church ignorantly disregarded the words of Jesus in Mat. 18:7: *For offenses must*

come, but woe to that man by whom the offense comes! If the Jewish people were to be cursed, it was *God's* business, not the Church's business!

xii. "They have, it is true, grievously sinned; but, O ye Christians, have they not grievously suffered for it? Is not the stroke of God heavy enough upon them? Do not then, by any unkind treatment or cruel oppression, increase their miseries. They are, above all others, the men who have seen affliction by the stroke of his rod." (Adam Clarke, 1811)

xiii. Gloriously, the curse was not and is not the end of God's plan for the Jewish people.

As Ezekiel 37 describes, God will - and has begun to - revive the Jewish people as back from the dead, and prepare them to be used in these last days. God is not done with Israel, and the curse *will not* be their final legacy.

i. **You shall become an astonishment, a proverb, and a byword among all nations where the LORD will drive you:** Even as with the blessings, God's purpose in cursing Israel would be greater than just immediately punishing them for their sin. It was to be a witness to the nations.

i. God would do this for His glory, and because it would glorify Him, it can even be said that He would *rejoice* in the work: **just as the LORD rejoiced over you to do you good and multiply you, so the LORD will rejoice over you to destroy you and bring you to nothing.**

ii. "For though he doth not delight in the death of a sinner in itself, yet he doth doubtless delight in the glorifying of his

justice upon incorrigible sinners, seeing the exercise of all his attributes must needs please him, else he were not perfectly happy." (Poole)

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without permission **2** All these blessings will come to you in abundance if you obey the LORD your God: **3** You will be blessed in the city and blessed in the field. **4** Your children will be blessed, as well as the produce of your soil, the offspring of your livestock, the calves of your herds, and the lambs of your flocks. **5** Your basket and your mixing bowl will be blessed. **6** You will be blessed when you come in and blessed when you go out. **7** The LORD will cause your enemies who attack you to be struck down before you; they will attack you from one direction but flee from you in seven different directions. **8** The LORD will decree blessing for you with respect to your barns and in everything you do – yes, he will bless you in the land he is giving you. **9**

The LORD will designate you as his holy people just as he promised you, if you keep his commandments and obey him.

10 Then all the peoples of the earth will see that you belong to the LORD, and they will respect you. **11** The LORD will greatly multiply your children, the offspring of your livestock, and the produce of your soil in the land which he promised your ancestors he would give you. **12**

The LORD will open for you his good treasure house, the heavens, to give you rain for the land in its season and to bless all you do; you will lend to many nations but you will not borrow from any. **13** The LORD will make you the head and not the tail, and you will always end up at the top and not at the bottom, if you obey his commandments which I am urging you today to be careful to do. **14** But you must not turn away from all the commandments I am giving you today, to either the right or left, nor pursue other gods and worship them.

15 “But if you ignore the LORD your God and are not careful to keep all his commandments and statutes I am giving you today, then all these curses will come upon you in full force:

16 You will be cursed in the city and cursed in the field. **17** Your basket and your mixing bowl will be cursed. **18** Your children will be cursed, as well as the produce of your soil, the calves of your herds, and the lambs of your flocks. **19** You will be cursed when you come in and cursed when you go out.

20 “The LORD will send on you a curse, confusing you and opposing you in everything you undertake until you are destroyed and quickly perish because of the evil of your deeds, in that you have forsaken me. **21** The LORD

will plague you with deadly diseases until he has completely removed you from the land you are about to possess. **22** He will afflict you with weakness, fever, inflammation, infection, sword, blight, and mildew; these will attack you until you perish. **23** The sky above your heads will be bronze and the earth beneath you iron. **24**

The LORD will make the rain of your land powder and dust; it will come down on you from the sky until you are destroyed.

25 “The LORD will allow you to be struck down before your enemies; you will attack them from one direction but flee from them in seven directions and will become an object of terror to all the kingdoms of the earth. **26** Your carcasses will

be food for every bird of the sky and wild animal of the earth, and there will be no one to chase them off. **27** The

LORD will afflict you with the boils of Egypt and with tumors, eczema, and scabies, all of which cannot be healed. **28** The

LORD will also subject you to madness, blindness, and confusion of mind. **29** You will feel your way along at noon

like the blind person does in darkness and you will not succeed in anything you do; you will be constantly

oppressed and continually robbed, with no one to save you. **30** You will be engaged to a woman and another man will

rape her. You will build a house but not live in it. You will

plant a vineyard but not even begin to use it. **31** Your ox will be slaughtered before your very eyes but you will not eat of it. Your donkey will be stolen from you as you watch and will not be returned to you.

Your flock of sheep will be given to your enemies and there will be no one to save you. **32** Your sons and daughters will be given to another people while you look on in vain all day, and you will be powerless to do anything about it. **33** As for the produce of your land and all your labor, a people you do not know will consume it, and you will be nothing but oppressed and crushed for the rest of your lives. **34** You will go insane from seeing all this. **35** The LORD will afflict you in your knees and on your legs with painful, incurable boils – from the soles of your feet to the top of your head. **36** The LORD will force you and your king whom you will appoint over you to go away to a people whom you and your ancestors have not known, and you will serve other gods of wood and stone there. **37** You will become an occasion of horror, a proverb, and an object of ridicule to all the peoples to whom the LORD will drive you.

38 “You will take much seed to the field but gather little harvest, because locusts will consume it. **39** You will plant vineyards and cultivate them, but you will not drink wine or gather in grapes, because worms will eat them. **40** You will have olive trees throughout your territory but you will not anoint yourself with olive oil, because the olives will drop off the trees while still unripe. **41** You will bear sons and daughters but not keep them, because they will be taken into captivity. **42** Whirring locusts will take over every tree and all the produce of your soil. **43** The foreigners who reside among you will become higher and higher over you and you will become lower and lower. **44**

They will lend to you but you will not lend to them; they will become the head and you will become the tail!

45 All these curses will fall on you, pursuing and overtaking you until you are destroyed, because you would not obey

the LORD your God by keeping his commandments and statutes that he has given you. **46**

These curses will be a perpetual sign and wonder with reference to you and your descendants.

47 “Because you have not served the LORD your God joyfully and wholeheartedly with the abundance of everything you have, **48** instead in hunger, thirst, nakedness, and poverty you will serve your enemies whom the LORD will send against you. They will place an iron yoke on your neck until they have destroyed you. **49** The LORD will raise up a distant nation against you, one from the other side of the earth as the eagle flies, a nation whose language you will not understand, **50** a nation of stern appearance that will have no regard for the elderly or pity for the young. **51** They will devour the offspring of your livestock and the produce of your soil until you are destroyed. They will not leave you with any grain, new wine, olive oil, calves of your herds, or lambs of your flocks until they have destroyed you. **52** They will besiege all of your villages until all of your high and fortified walls collapse – those in which you put your confidence throughout the land. They will besiege all your villages throughout the land the LORD your God has given you. **53**

You will then eat your own offspring, the flesh of the sons and daughters the LORD your God has given you, because of the severity of the siege by which your enemies will constrict you. **54** The man among you who is by nature tender and sensitive will turn against his brother, his beloved wife, and his remaining children. **55** He will withhold from all of them his children’s flesh that he is eating (since there is nothing else left), because of the severity of the siege by which your enemy will constrict you in your villages. **56** Likewise, the most tender and delicate of your women, who would never think of putting even the sole of her foot on the ground because of her daintiness, will turn against her beloved husband, her sons and daughters,

57 and will secretly eat her afterbirth and her newborn children (since she has nothing else), because of the severity of the siege by which your enemy will constrict you in your villages.

58 “If you refuse to obey all the words of this law, the things written in this scroll, and refuse to fear this glorious and awesome name, the LORD your God, **59** then the LORD will increase your punishments and those of your descendants – great and long-lasting afflictions and severe, enduring illnesses. **60** He will infect you with all the diseases of Egypt that you dreaded, and they will persistently afflict you. **61** Moreover, the LORD will bring upon you every kind of sickness and plague not mentioned in this scroll of commandments, until you have perished.

62 There will be very few of you left, though at one time you were as numerous as the stars in the sky, because you will have disobeyed the LORD your God. **63** This is what will happen: Just as the LORD delighted to do good for you and make you numerous, he will take delight in destroying and decimating you. You will be uprooted from the land you are about to possess. **64** The LORD will scatter you among all nations, from one end of the earth to the other. There you will worship other gods that neither you nor your ancestors have known, gods of wood and stone. **65** Among those nations you will have no rest nor will there be a place of peaceful rest for the soles of your feet, for there the LORD will give you an anxious heart, failing eyesight, and a spirit of despair. **66** Your life will hang in doubt before you; you will be terrified by night and day and will have no certainty of surviving from one day to the next. **67** In the morning you will say, ‘If only it were evening!’ And in the evening you will say, ‘I wish it were morning!’ because of the things you will fear and the things you will see. **68** Then the LORD will make you return to Egypt by ship, over a route I said to you that you would never see again. There you will sell

yourselves to your enemies as male and female slaves, but no one will buy you."

1 (28:69) These are the words of the covenant that the LORD commanded Moses to make with the people of Israel in the land of Moab, in addition to the covenant he had made with them at Horeb.

Guzik - Deuteronomy 29:1-29

Deuteronomy 29 - Renewal of the Covenant

A. God's mighty works for Israel.

1. (1) The covenant **in the land of Moab**.

These *are* the words of the covenant which the LORD commanded Moses to make with the children of Israel in the land of Moab, besides the covenant which He made with them in Horeb.

a. **These are the words of the covenant:** Some 40 years before this, at **Horeb** (Mount Sinai), Israel made a covenant with God: *Then he took the Book of the Covenant and read in the hearing of the people. And they said, "All that the LORD has said we will do, and be obedient." And Moses took the blood, sprinkled it on the people, and said, "This is the blood of the covenant which the LORD has made with you according to all these words."* (Exo. 24:7-8) b. **Besides the**

covenant which He made with them in Horeb: For the most part, the people who had the blood of the covenant sprinkled upon them had died in the wilderness.

The generation of unbelief had died, now it was an opportunity for the generation of faith. So, Moses will reconfirm the covenant with the new generation.

2. (2-4) Israel saw wonders, but did not see them.

Now Moses called all Israel and said to them:

"You have seen all that the LORD did before your eyes in the land of Egypt, to Pharaoh and to all his servants and to all his land; the great trials which your eyes have seen, the signs, and those great wonders. Yet the LORD has not given you a heart to perceive and eyes to see and ears to hear, to this *very* day.

a. **You have seen all that the LORD before**

your eyes: Israel saw **great wonders** from the hand of God since coming from Egypt. They saw the plagues, they saw the death of the firstborn, they saw the Red Sea parted, they saw the Egyptian armies destroyed, they saw victories won by prayer, they ate the manna, they drank the miraculously provided water, and they saw miracle after miracle.

b. **Yet the LORD has not given you a heart**

to perceive: The miracles in and of themselves could not accomplish anything in the heart of Israel. If God did not send His Spirit to change their hearts, then the greatest wonder

imaginable would not make a difference.

i. Some people today think the greatest help

to evangelism would be to see more

miraculous events. After all, who could *not* believe in the face of such displays of spiritual power? But seeing **great wonders**

accomplishes nothing apart from a supernatural work of God in someone's heart.

3. (5-9) God's great works for Israel in the wilderness.

And I have led you forty years in the wilderness.

Your clothes have not worn out on you, and your sandals have not worn out on your feet. You

have not eaten bread, nor have you drunk wine

or *similar* drink, that you may know that I *am* the LORD your God. And when you came to this place, Sihon king of Heshbon and Og king of

Bashan came out against us to battle, and we

conquered them. We took their land and gave it as an inheritance to the Reubenites, to the

Gadites, and to half the tribe of Manasseh.

Therefore keep the words of this covenant, and do them, that you may prosper in all that you do.

a. **And I have led you forty years in the**

wilderness: During their forty years **in the wilderness**, their **clothes** did not wear out, their **sandals** did not wear out, and though they had no **bread** to eat or **wine** to drink, their needs were provided for. Israel **conquered** over their enemies, and they **took their land**.

i. Plainly, these are remarkable miracles.

Clothes and sandals simply do not last 40 years of hard marching in the wilderness apart from a miracle. The wilderness does not provide enough food and water to meet the needs of some two million people apart from a miracle. A nation of slaves for 400 years does not conquer standing nations and take their land apart from a miracle.

ii. Each of these *great wonders* (each proof in themselves of God's power and love for Israel) has a spiritual counterpart in our lives.

- In the wilderness of this world, God provides *clothes* for us (Rev. 3:18)

- He gives us *shoes* (Eph. 6:15)

- He gives us bread and wine to drink (1Co. 11:23-26)

- In Him we *conquer* our enemies (Rom. 8:37)

- We can take the *land* of our spiritual enemies (2Co. 10:4-5)

b. **Therefore keep the words of this**

covenant: Seeing these great works of God, there is one logical response. Knowing the greatness of God's love and power should make Israel more committed than ever to His covenant.

B. Renewing the covenant.

1. (10-15) The parties to the covenant.

All of you stand today before the LORD your God: your leaders and your tribes and your elders and your officers, all the men of Israel, your little ones and your wives; also the stranger who *is* in your camp, from the one who cuts your wood to the one who draws your water; that you may enter into covenant with the LORD your God, and into His oath, which the LORD your God makes

with you today, that He may establish you today as a people for Himself, and *that* He may be God to you, just as He has spoken to you, and just as He has sworn to your fathers, to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. I make this covenant and this oath, not with you alone, but with *him* who stands here with us today before the LORD our God, as well as with *him* who *is* not here with us today a. **All of you stand today before the LORD**

your God: This means that the covenant was made with the entire nation. This included the leaders, the men, the women, the children, and even the servants.

b. **That He may establish you today as a**

people for Himself: All of Israel was included in God's desire to **enter into covenant**, to be the **people for Himself**. He wasn't just looking for a few prominent and talented people, or for just one spiritual tribe like the Levites. God wanted the whole nation to be this **people for Himself**.

c. **As well as with him who is not here with us today:**

But the covenant extended beyond those who stood before the LORD and Moses on that day. It also included **him who is not with us here today**. The descendants of this nation assembled before the LORD and Moses were also included in the covenant.

i. "The covenant demand is here extended to those who were yet to be born. Future generations were one with that early Israel who took the oath at Sinai." (Thompson)

2. (16-20) The promise of judgment against the covenant-breaker.

(for you know that we dwelt in the land of Egypt and that we came through the nations which you passed by, and you saw their abominations and their idols which *were* among them; wood and stone and silver and gold); so that there may not be among you man or woman or family or tribe, whose heart turns away today from the LORD our God, to go *and* serve the gods of these nations, and that there may not be among you a root bearing bitterness or wormwood; and so it may not happen, when he hears the words of this

curse, that he blesses himself in his heart, saying,

"I shall have peace, even though I follow the dictates of my heart"; as though the drunkard could be included with the sober. The LORD

would not spare him; for then the anger of the LORD and His jealousy would burn against that

man, and every curse that is written in this book would settle on him, and the LORD would blot out his name from under heaven.

a. **You saw their abominations and their**

idols which were among them: Israel had seen the **abominations and . . . idols** of their pagan neighbors. God promised that anyone who **turns away from the LORD our God, to**

go and serve the gods of these nations, should never presume on a sense of peace in his heart.

b. **He blesses himself in his heart, saying**

"I have peace" : Perhaps one who has turned from the LORD and to idols hears the curses against the covenant-breaker, yet thinks he has escaped any penalty. So, **he blesses himself in his heart, saying "I have peace."**

He may have an immediate sense of peace at the moment, but it is the peace of the blind, the peace of the ignorant, who cannot see the peril of coming judgment.

i. A rank sinner may feel confident in his own heart, having a marvelous sense of "peace." But this peace is an illusion. It is the peace of the blind, of the unknowing. If

a bomb is on a plane, most everyone on the plane is at peace the moment before the bomb explodes. But their peace is based on their ignorance. In the same way, a sinner may be completely untroubled in his heart. But this is only because he is blind.

ii. **As though the drunkard could be included with the sober:** The **drunkard** may be happy when he is drunk, but his happiness is based on a illusion. God warns against including the peace of the righteous with the peace the wicked might seem to have.

c. **The LORD would not spare him:** This truth is plain *"There is no peace," says the LORD, "for the wicked."* (Isa. 48:22) The score may be settled on either side of eternity, but it will be settled. No one can forsake the LORD and escape the consequences.

3. (21-28) The purpose for judgment against the covenant-breaker.

And the LORD would separate him from all the tribes of Israel for adversity, according to all the curses of the covenant that are written in this Book of the Law, so that the coming generation of your children who rise up after you, and the foreigner who comes from a far land, would say, when they see the plagues of that land and the sicknesses which the LORD has laid on it: "The whole land *is* brimstone, salt, and burning; it is not sown, nor does it bear, nor does any grass grow there, like the overthrow of Sodom and Gomorrah, Admah, and Zeboim, which the LORD

overthrew in His anger and His wrath." All nations would say, "Why has the LORD done so to this land? What does the heat of this great anger mean?" Then *people* would say: "Because they have forsaken the covenant of the LORD God of their fathers, which He made with them when He brought them out of the land of Egypt; for they went and served other gods and worshiped them, gods that they did not know and that He had not given to them. Then the anger of the LORD was aroused against this land, to bring on it every curse that is written in this book. And the LORD uprooted them from their land in anger, in wrath, and in great indignation, and cast them into another land, as *it is* this day."

a. **And the LORD would separate him from all the tribes of Israel for adversity:** There is an obvious reason to punish the covenant-breaker for his own sake. But God has a purpose beyond the reason of individual covenant.

b. **So that the coming generation of your children who rise up after you, and the foreigner who comes from a far land:** God's purpose in bringing judgment against a covenant-breaking Israel was also for the sake of **the coming generation of your children .**

. . and the foreigner. When they see the devastation that comes from breaking God's covenant, when they see what happens to the

land **which the LORD overthrew in His anger and wrath**, they will be warned to obedience.

i. We can also learn from the calamity that comes on the lives of others when they break God's covenant. We can learn that the price of disobedience is not worth it. We can learn that the commands of God are good, and protective in our lives.

c. **All nations would say:** God's purpose in bringing judgment against a covenant-breaking Israel was also for the sake of **all nations**.

When they see what happens to a nation who forsakes the LORD, they will be warned to obedience.

4. (29) God's revelation to Israel.

The secret *things belong* to the LORD our God, but those *things which are revealed belong* to us and to our children forever, that *we* may do all the words of this law.

a. **The secret things belong to the LORD**

our God: In the midst of this encouragement to obedience, Moses pauses to give a principle of how God speaks to us. First, God never declares *everything* to man:. There are secrets God has, and will always have. He has the right to have secrets, because He is God.

i. God is bigger and smarter than us and always will be. We must simply accept this.

"For My thoughts are not your thoughts, nor are your ways My ways," says the LORD.

"For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways, and My thoughts than your thoughts." (Isa. 55:8-9)

b. **Those things which are revealed:**

Second, God does reveal *some* things to man.

Since God is there, and *He is not silent*, we must do all we can to pay close attention to Him.

c. **Those things which are revealed belong**

to us: Third, God's revelation is meant to *say* something to us. God did not speak just to blow our minds or to amuse us; there is a message which *belongs* to us. While we cannot perfectly understand God's revelation, it is perfectly understandable.

d. **To us and to our children:** Fourth, God's revelation is *trans-generational*. Yes, God had a specific message for

Moses' generation, but the message goes beyond its original audience to speak to all generations which follow.

e. **To us and our children forever:** Fifth, God's revelation is *eternal*. His word not only lasts **forever**, it is **forever** relevant. God's word is more relevant than any new fad or interest which might sweep through the world or the church.

g. **That we may do all the words of this**

law: Finally, God's revelation must *matter* to us.

He has not spoken to us merely to satisfy our curiosity about spiritual things. He has spoken to us to affect the way we *live*. If we are only hearers of the word, and not doers also, then we have not really received His word.

© 2006 David Guzik - No distribution beyond personal use without permission **2** Moses proclaimed to all Israel as follows: "You have seen all that the LORD did in the land of Egypt to Pharaoh, all his servants, and his land. **3** Your eyes have seen the great judgments, those signs and mighty wonders. **4** But to this very day the LORD has not given you an understanding mind, perceptive eyes, or discerning ears! **5**

I have led you through the desert for forty years. Your clothing has not worn out nor have your sandals deteriorated. **6** You have eaten no bread and drunk no wine or beer – all so that you might know that I am the LORD your God! **7** When you came to this place King Sihon of Heshbon and King Og of Bashan came out to make war and we defeated them. **8** Then we took their land and gave it as an inheritance to Reuben, Gad, and half the tribe of Manasseh.

9 "Therefore, keep the terms of this covenant and obey them so that you may be successful in everything you do.

10 You are standing today, all of you, before the LORD your God – the heads of your tribes, your elders, your officials, every Israelite man, **11** your infants, your wives, and the foreigners living in your encampment, those who chop wood and those who carry water – **12** so that you may

enter by oath into the covenant the LORD your God is making with you today. **13** Today he will affirm that you are his people and that he is your God, just as he promised you and as he swore by oath to your ancestors Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. **14** It is not with you alone that I am making this covenant by oath, **15** but with whoever stands with us here today before the LORD our God as well as those not with us here today.

16 “(For you know how we lived in the land of Egypt and how we crossed through the nations as we traveled. **17**

You have seen their detestable things and idols of wood, stone, silver, and gold.) **18** Beware that the heart of no man, woman, clan, or tribe among you turns away from the LORD our God today to pursue and serve the gods of those nations; beware that there is among you no root producing poisonous and bitter fruit. **19** When such a person hears the words of this oath he secretly blesses himself and says, “I will have peace though I continue to walk with a stubborn spirit.” This will destroy the watered ground with the parched. **20** The LORD will be unwilling to forgive him, and his intense anger will rage against that man; all the curses written in this scroll will fall upon him and the LORD will obliterate his name from memory. **21**

The LORD will single him out for judgment from all the tribes of Israel according to all the curses of the covenant written in this scroll of the law. **22** The generation to come – your descendants who will rise up after you, as well as the foreigner who will come from distant places – will see the afflictions of that land and the illnesses that the LORD

has brought on it. **23** The whole land will be covered with brimstone, salt, and burning debris; it will not be planted nor will it sprout or produce grass. It will resemble the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, Admah and Zeboiim, which the LORD destroyed in his intense anger. **24** Then all the nations will ask, “Why has the LORD done all this to this land? What is this fierce, heated display of anger all about?”

25 Then people will say, “Because they abandoned the covenant of the LORD, the God of their ancestors, which he made with them when he brought them out of the land of Egypt. **26** They went and served other gods and worshiped them, gods they did not know and that he did not permit them to worship. **27** That is why the LORD’s anger erupted against this land, bringing on it all the curses written in this scroll. **28** So the LORD has uprooted them from their land in anger, wrath, and great rage and has deported them to another land, as is clear today.” **29** Secret things belong to the LORD our God, but those that are revealed belong to us and our descendants forever, so that we might obey all the words of this law.

1 “When you have experienced all these things, both the blessings and the curses I have set before you, you will reflect upon them in all the nations where the LORD your God has banished you.

Guzik - Deuteronomy 30:1-20

Deuteronomy 30 - The Choice

A. Restoration for a repentant Israel.

1. (1) When all these things come upon you.

Now it shall come to pass, when all these things come upon you, the blessing and the curse which I have set before you, and you call *them* to mind among all the nations where the LORD your God drives you,

a. **Now it shall come to pass, when all these things come upon you:** Under the inspiration of the LORD, Moses carefully explained the blessings and curses that would come upon an obedient or disobedient Israel.

Under the same inspiration, Moses knew that **all these things would come upon** Israel.

i. From the height of blessing during the reigns of David and Solomon, to the depth of cursing at the fall of Jerusalem, Israel's history has been a legacy of either being

blessed or cursed under the terms of the Old Covenant.

b. And you call them to mind among all the nations where the LORD your God drives

you: God knew that Israel would be scattered and exiled, and here through Moses, God calls the *Diaspora* (Israel dispersed among the nations) to remember the promises of **the blessing and the curse.**

2. (2-5) God's promise to regather Israel in the Promised Land.

And you return to the LORD your God and obey His voice, according to all that I command you today, you and your children, with all your heart and with all your soul, that the LORD your God will bring you back from captivity, and have compassion on you, and gather you again from all the nations where the LORD your God has scattered you. If *any* of you are driven out to the farthest *parts* under heaven, from there the LORD your God will gather you, and from there He will bring you. Then the LORD your God will bring you to the land which your fathers possessed, and you shall possess it. He will prosper you and multiply you more than your fathers.

a. Return to the LORD your God: As Israel would return to the LORD, God would bless them and **bring you back from captivity, and have compassion on you.**

i. Of course, this was fulfilled in part by the return of the Babylonian exiles during the times of Ezra and Nehemiah. But the ultimate fulfillment of this would await the Twentieth Century, when God would regather Israel in the Promised Land. This modern regathering is a larger, broader, more sovereign, and more miraculous restoration than that recorded in Ezra and

Nehemiah.

b. From all the nations where the LORD

your God has scattered you: The modern regathering of Israel more accurately fulfills this promise than the return from the Babylonian exile. Today, Israel is populated from Jews from virtually every country in the world. The breadth of this promise is important, because God repeats the idea in verse 4: **If any of you are driven out to the farthest parts under heaven, from there the LORD God will gather you.**

i. Adam Clarke, writing in 1811, recognized that this regathering had to be fulfilled in a future time: "As this promise refers to a return from captivity in which they had been scattered among all nations, consequently it is not the Babylonish captivity which is intended; and the repossession of their land must be different from that which was consequent on their return from Chaldea."

c. Then the LORD your God will bring you

to the land which your fathers possessed,

and you shall possess it: The regathering had to happen in the land of Israel. The modern regathering of Israel more accurately fulfills this promise than the return from the Babylonian exile. In the return from the Babylonian exile, Israel was still a vassal state of the Persians.

But in the modern regathering of Israel, **you shall possess it** is literally fulfilled.

i. At one time, in the early days of the Zionist movement, the British offered the country of Uganda to the Jews as a place to establish a Jewish state. If that would have happened, and if Jews from all over the world would have flocked there to establish a Jewish state, it would not fulfill the promise of regathering stated here and in

other Old Testament passages. The promise here is plain: **The land which your fathers possessed.**

d. **He will prosper you and multiply you more than your fathers:** This promise is fulfilled only in the modern regathering of Israel, not in the return from the Babylonian exile. In the days of the return from the Babylonian exile, the Jewish community was small, weak, and poor. But today, under the modern regathering of Israel, the state of Israel does indeed **prosper** and the promise to **multiply you more than your fathers** is fulfilled.

Israel, as a nation, is larger, stronger, and richer than at any time in Biblical history.

3. (6) The spiritual regathering of Israel.

And the LORD your God will circumcise your heart and the heart of your descendants, to love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul, that you may live.

a. **And the LORD your God will circumcise your heart . . . to love the LORD your God with all your heart:**

As remarkable and as prophetically meaningful the modern regathering of Israel is, it is incomplete. The spiritual dimension of the regathering has not yet been accomplished.

i. Today Israel is a largely secular nation.

There is respect for the Bible as a book of history and national identity, but there is not, and has not been, a true turning to the LORD God, particularly as a nation.

ii. We can say that in a sense, not even the religious or Orthodox Jews have completely turned to the LORD. Though they have had an important and precious part in God's plan for Israel in helping a spiritual consciousness for the Jewish people to survive through the

centuries of the *Diaspora*, they have not truly turned to the LORD. We can say this because the character and nature of the

LORD is perfectly expressed in His Messiah, Jesus. Jesus said, *He who believes in Me, believes not in Me but in Him who sent Me. And he who sees Me sees Him who sent Me.*

(Joh. 12:44-45) Since the Jewish people, except for a precious remnant, reject Jesus, they are rejecting the LORD God.

iii. But God's promise still stands. As the final aspect of the promise to regather Israel,

God will restore them spiritually. He

promises to **circumcise your heart**. This is an idea repeated in the promises of the New Covenant, in passages like Eze. 36:26-27: *I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; I will take the heart of stone out of your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will keep My judgments and do them.*

Indeed, Paul promised that *all Israel will be saved* (Rom. 11:26). Jesus said that He would not return until Israel embraced Him as Messiah: *For I say to you, you shall see Me no more til you say, "Blessed is He who comes in the name of the LORD!"* (Mat.

23:39)

iv. Some have thought that because the modern regathering of Israel has not yet demonstrated this spiritual dynamic that it has nothing to do with these prophecies. But the spiritual dynamic is properly listed in Deu. 30:2-6 as the last of the blessings of regathering. Also, the picture of regathering in Ezekiel 37 - the vision of the dry bones -

shows Israel regathered, and strong, *before* the LORD breathed the breath of His Spirit on the regathered Israel.

We regard the modern regathering of Israel as a remarkable sign, and an extremely significant - but thus far only partial - fulfillment of these prophecies.

3. (7-10) Blessings upon repentant Israel.

Also the LORD your God will put all these curses on your enemies and on those who hate you, who persecuted you. And you will again obey the voice of the LORD and do all His commandments which I command you today. The LORD your God will make you abound in all the work of your hand, in the fruit of your body, in the increase of your livestock, and in the produce of your land for good. For the LORD will again rejoice over you for good as He rejoiced over your fathers, if you obey the voice of the LORD your God, to keep His commandments and His statutes which are written in this Book of the Law, *and* if you turn to the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul.

a. Also the LORD your God will put all these curses on your enemies . . . The LORD your God will make you abound: In

part, these prophecies are fulfilled now in the modern regathering of Israel. But perhaps their ultimate fulfillment will happen in the millennium, when Israel has regathered as a

people truly turned to the LORD and His Messiah, Jesus.

B. Moses concludes his great sermon: *choose life!*

1. (11-14) Israel's capability to keep the covenant.

For this commandment which I command you today *is* not *too* mysterious for you, nor *is* it far off. It *is* not in heaven, that you should say, "Who will ascend into heaven for us and bring it to us, that we may hear it and do it?" Nor *is* it beyond the sea, that you should say, "Who will go over the sea for us and bring it to us, that we may hear it

and do it?" But the word *is* very near you, in your mouth and in your heart, that you may do it.

a. **For this commandment which I**

command you today: The covenant which

God made with Israel - the Old Covenant - was

not **too mysterious for you, nor is it far off.**

Israel could indeed keep this covenant. God was not expecting the impossible from Israel when

He expected them to keep this covenant.

b. **But the word is very near you, in your**

mouth and in your heart, that you may do

it: However, this is not intended to mean that the Mosaic Law could be perfectly kept, and that a person could be sufficiently obedient to the Mosaic Law to earn a righteous standing

before God.

i. Remember that the *law* was only one

aspect of the Old Covenant. There were also

the aspects of *sacrifice* and *the choice*. God never expected Israel to perfectly obey the law and find righteousness through law-

obedience. That is why He provided for the

sacrifice - the punishment of a perfect, innocent victim in the place of the sinner.

God did not expect an Israelite to trust in his obedience to the Law to save Him (though

God wanted Israel to love His law). God

expected an Israelite to trust in the

atonement made by *sacrifice* to make him righteous, and to understand that this sacrifice pointed towards a perfect sacrifice

God would one day make through the

Messiah. In this, a godly Israelite, in the Old Covenant, trusted in the work of Jesus the

Messiah to save him even before the time of Jesus.

c. **That you may do it:** Yet the Old Covenant, *as a whole*, including the aspects of law, sacrifice, and choice could be kept. It wasn't beyond Israel's capability to keep.

2. (15-18) The choice.

See, I have set before you today life and good, death and evil, in that I command you today to love the LORD your God, to walk in His ways, and to keep His commandments, His statutes, and His judgments, that you may live and multiply; and the LORD your God will bless you in the land which you go to possess. But if your heart turns away so that you do not hear, and are drawn

away, and worship other gods and serve them, I announce to you today that you shall surely

perish; you shall not prolong *your* days in the land which you cross over the Jordan to go in and possess.

a. **See, I have set before you today life and good, death and evil:** Under the terms of the Old Covenant, Israel had a choice: **life** or **death**, **good** or **evil**. It was up to them. God was going to glorify Himself through Israel one way or another. How it would happen was really their *choice*.

b. **The LORD your God will bless you in the land which you go to possess:** Under the terms of the Old Covenant, Israel, if obedient, would see blessing. If disobedient, then Israel would **surely perish**. It was up to Israel, and based on their conduct.

i. It is essential for us to understand that we, in Jesus Christ, *do not* relate to God on the terms of the Old Covenant, but on the terms of a better covenant: The New

Covenant. Under the New Covenant, my relationship with God is not based on what *I do* for God, but on what *Jesus has done* on my behalf. There is, of course, more to the New Covenant than this, but this is one crucial distinction between the two covenants.

ii. If this Old Covenant is inferior to the New Covenant, and if there was a high price to pay for rejecting the Old Covenant, should we not know there is an even greater penalty for rejecting an even greater covenant? (Heb. 10:28-29)

3. (19-20) **Choose life.**

I call heaven and earth as witnesses today against you, *that* I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing; therefore choose life, that both you and your descendants may live; that you may love the LORD your God, that you may obey His voice, and that you may cling to Him, for He *is* your life and the length of your days; and that you may dwell in the land which the LORD swore to your fathers, to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, to give them.

a. **I call heaven and earth as witness today against you:** In these most solemn words, Moses set the choice before Israel. They had to choose between **life and death, blessing and cursing.**

b. **Therefore choose life:** At the same time, though the choice belonged to Israel, God cared about *what* they chose. When Moses pled with Israel, crying out **choose life**, we know he reflected the heart of God toward Israel. How God glorified Himself through Israel was up to them, but it was obviously God's preference that He glorify Himself through an obedient, blessed Israel. So He pled, **choose life!**

i. Man today, even outside the Old Covenant, is confronted with the choice. But the choice focuses first not on "Will I obey God or not?" but on "Will I trust in Jesus for my standing before God?" Jesus said, *He who is not with Me is against Me, and he who does not gather with Me scatters.* (Luk.

11:23) Jesus is still asking the question, *who do you say that I am* (Mat. 16:15), and our choice in answering that question determines our eternal destiny.

c. **That you may love the LORD your God:** To love God this way, to really trust Him, is explained well in Deu. 30:20. To love and trust God means to **obey His voice**, for a child who really loves and trusts their father will obey him.

It means to **cling to Him**, for if we really love and trust Him, we will be attached to Him. It means to regard Him as our **life and the**

length of your days, because if we love and trust Him, He is not *part* of our life, He *is* our life.

© 2006 David Guzik - *No distribution beyond personal use without permission* **2** Then if you and your descendants turn to the LORD

your God and obey him with your whole mind and being just as I am commanding you today, **3** the LORD your God will reverse your captivity and have pity on you. He will turn and gather you from all the peoples among whom he has scattered you. **4** Even if your exiles are in the most distant land, from there the LORD your God will gather you and bring you back. **5** Then he will bring you to the land your ancestors possessed and you also will possess it; he will do better for you and multiply you more than he did your ancestors. **6** The LORD your God will also cleanse your heart and the hearts of your descendants so that you may love him with all your mind and being and so that you may live. **7** Then the LORD your God will put all these curses on your enemies, on those who hate you and persecute you. **8** You will return and obey the LORD, keeping all his commandments I am giving you today. **9**

The LORD your God will make the labor of your hands abundantly successful and multiply your children, the offspring of your cattle, and the produce of your soil. For the LORD your God will once more rejoice over you to make you prosperous just as he rejoiced over your ancestors, **10** if you obey the LORD your God and keep his commandments and statutes that are written in this scroll of the law. But you must turn to him with your whole mind and being.

11 “This commandment I am giving you today is not too difficult for you, nor is it too remote. **12** It is not in heaven, as though one must say, “Who will go up to heaven to get it for us and proclaim it to us so we may obey it?” **13** And it is not across the sea, as though one must say, “Who will cross over to the other side of the sea and get it for us and proclaim it to us so we may obey it?” **14** For the thing is very near you – it is in your mouth and in your mind so that you can do it.

15 “Look! I have set before you today life and prosperity on the one hand, and death and disaster on the other. **16**

What I am commanding you today is to love the LORD your God, to walk in his ways, and to obey his commandments, his statutes, and his ordinances. Then you will live and become numerous and the LORD your God will bless you in the land which you are about to possess. **17** However, if you turn aside and do not obey, but are lured away to worship and serve other gods, **18** I declare to you this very day that you will certainly perish!

You will not extend your time in the land you are crossing the Jordan to possess. **19** Today I invoke heaven and earth as a witness against you that I have set life and death, blessing and curse, before you. Therefore choose life so that you and your descendants may live! **20** I also call on you to love the LORD your God, to obey him and be loyal to him, for he gives you life and enables you to live continually in the land the LORD promised to give to your ancestors Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.”

1 Then Moses went and spoke these words to all Israel.

Guzik - Deuteronomy 31:1-30

Deuteronomy 31 - Some Final Instructions from

Moses

A. Moses charges the people, Joshua, and the priests.

1. (1-2) Moses at one hundred and twenty.

Then Moses went and spoke these words to all

Israel. And he said to them: "I *am* one hundred and twenty years old today. I can no longer go out and come in. Also the LORD has said to me, 'You shall not cross over this Jordan.'"

a. **I am one hundred and twenty years old**

today: Moses, at 120 years, was not limited by his physical condition (in a short time he will climb to the top of a mountain). Instead, he could **no longer go out and come in** because he was limited by God's command - the decree that Moses would not enter the Promised Land (Num. 20:7-12).

b. **You shall not cross over this Jordan:** These specific words of God to Moses are not recorded in the Numbers 20 account; this must

be a further elaboration of the decree *you shall not bring this congregation into the land which I have given them* (Num. 20:12).

i. There is a difference between *you shall not bring this congregation into the land* and **you shall not cross over this Jordan**. By the first statement, it is allowable that Moses could go into the Promised Land, but not as the leader of the nation, having passed the torch of leadership to Joshua. But God made it even more clear to Moses: **you shall not cross over this Jordan**.

ii. God's correction of Moses was hard; not only will he not lead Israel into the Promised Land, he will not even go there. That which he had dreamed of, and felt called to, as a child in the palaces of Egypt - to deliver

God's people - will not be completed.
Another will finish the job, and Moses' feet
will never touch the soil of the land that God had promised
to the covenant descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.
Why was it
such a severe punishment? What did Moses
do?

iii. Essentially, at Meribah (Num. 20:7-12),
when Israel complained and cried out for
water, Moses misrepresented God. He
misrepresented God by lecturing the nation
harshly and unnecessarily. Moses
misrepresented God by acting as if God
needed him to provide water for the people.
And Moses both misrepresented and
disobeyed God by angrily striking the rock
twice, instead of just speaking to the rock as God had told
him to.

iv. This may seem an excessively harsh
punishment for Moses; after all, with only
one slip-up, he now must die short of the
Promised Land? But Moses was being judged
by a stricter standard because of his
leadership position with the nation, and
because he had a uniquely close relationship
with God. It is right for teachers and leaders to be judged by
a stricter standard (Jam.

3:1); though it is unrighteous to hold
teachers and leaders to a perfect standard.
It is true the people's conduct was worse
than Moses' but it is irrelevant.

v. Worst of all, Moses defaced a beautiful
picture of Jesus' redemptive work through
the rock which provided water in the
wilderness. The New Testament makes it
clear this water-providing, life-giving rock

was a picture of Jesus (1Co. 10:4). Jesus, being struck once, provided life for all who would drink of Him (Joh. 7:37). But was unnecessary - and unrighteous - that Jesus would be struck again, much less again twice, because the Son of God needed only to suffer once (Heb. 10:10-12). Jesus can now be come to with words of faith (Rom. 10:8-10), as Moses should have only used words of faith to bring life-giving water to the nation of Israel. Moses "ruined" this picture of the work of Jesus God intended.

vi. So now, Moses must face his destiny. Not only *you shall not bring this congregation into the land* but also, **you shall not cross over this Jordan.**

2. (3-6) The charge to the children of Israel.

The LORD your God Himself crosses over before you; He will destroy these nations from before you, and you shall dispossess them. Joshua himself crosses over before you, just as the LORD has said. And the LORD will do to them as He did to Sihon and Og, the kings of the Amorites and their land, when He destroyed them. The LORD will give them over to you, that you may do to them according to every commandment which I have commanded you. Be strong and of good courage, do not fear nor be afraid of them; for the LORD your God, He *is* the One who goes with you. He will not leave you nor forsake you.

a. **The LORD your God Himself crosses**

over before you: Moses had led Israel for 40

years; he was the only leader most of these people had ever known. Yet the nation could be confident and Moses could go his way in peace because He knew God was with Israel. Israel,

Moses, or Joshua did not have to be afraid.

Instead, they could **Be strong and of good courage**, because **the LORD your God, He is the One who goes with you**.

i. Moses was a great man; one of the greatest to ever walk this earth. But Moses was not irreplaceable. God being with them, Israel was in good hands, with or without Moses.

b. **Be strong and of good courage**: It was now time for the nation to take courage in the LORD and **not fear nor be dismayed**. Moses passes from the scene, but God has not abandoned Israel.

3. (7-8) The charge to Joshua.

Then Moses called Joshua and said to him in the sight of all Israel, "Be strong and of good courage, for you must go with this people to the land which the LORD has sworn to their fathers to give them, and you shall cause them to inherit it. And the LORD, He *is* the one who goes before you. He will be with you, He will not leave you nor forsake you; do not fear nor be dismayed."

a. **Then Moses called Joshua and said to him in the sight of all Israel**: Bringing the people into the Promised Land was God's work.

He was going to do it. But God almost always does His work through men and women who make themselves available to Him.

i. Sometimes people wrongly say, "It is all the LORD, it's all the LORD." True, God does *His* work, but He does it *through* people.

b. **Be strong and of good courage**: Since God was going to use Joshua, he must **be strong and of good courage**. But Moses

knew Joshua, and knew that he would. So he confidently said, **you shall cause them to inherit it**.

i. Men of encouragement like Moses are a

blessing. Moses knew that Joshua might be wavering, so he encouraged him, and pushed him forward to be more than he perhaps thought he could be. God uses encouraging people to help us fulfill the destiny He has for us.

ii. Joshua was the man; but the work was the LORD's: **He is the one who goes before you.**

4. (9-13) The charge to the priests.

So Moses wrote this law and delivered it to the priests, the sons of Levi, who bore the ark of the covenant of the LORD, and to all the elders of Israel. And Moses commanded them, saying: "At the end of *every* seven years, at the appointed time in the year of release, at the Feast of Tabernacles, when all Israel comes to appear

before the LORD your God in the place which He chooses, you shall read this law before all Israel in their hearing. Gather the people together, men and women and little ones, and the stranger who *is* within your gates, that they may hear and that they may learn to fear the LORD your God and carefully observe all the words of this law, and *that* their children, who have not known it, may hear and learn to fear the LORD your God as long as you live in the land which you cross the Jordan to possess."

a. **Moses wrote this law:** Just as the kings of Israel were to write their own copy of God's law (Deu. 17:18), so **Moses wrote this law**. He, as an uncrowned king over Israel, loved God's word and wanted to pass it on to the generation behind him.

b. **You shall read this law before all Israel in their hearing:** Part of the job of the Levites was to minister the word of God to the nation, as they were scattered throughout the nation.

Every seven years they were to have a public reading and explanation of the law of God, as

was modeled in Neh. 8:1-8.

i. The first we know of a public reading of the law is in Jos. 8:30. The next we hear of it is during the reign of Jehoshaphat (2Ch. 17:7), more than 500 years later. Then, in the reign of Josiah there was another public reading of the law (2Ch. 34:30), more than 250 years after Jehoshaphat. Of course, there might have been public readings of the law as commanded here which are not recorded; but the fact that some are recorded probably means they were unusual, not typical. With this kind of neglect of God's word, no wonder Israel was so often in trouble!

c. **And that their children . . . may hear and learn to fear the LORD:** This seven-year national focus on God's word was especially important for the children among the people of Israel. Through His word, they could come to a personal relationship with the LORD.

B. Moses insures his legacy.

1. (14-15) The preface to Joshua's inauguration as leader of Israel.

Then the LORD said to Moses, "Behold, the days approach when you must die; call Joshua, and present yourselves in the tabernacle of meeting, that I may inaugurate him." So Moses and Joshua went and presented themselves in the tabernacle of meeting. Now the LORD appeared at the tabernacle in a pillar of cloud, and the pillar of cloud stood above the door of the tabernacle.

a. **Present yourselves in the tabernacle of**

meeting: Through the wilderness journey, we find Moses and Joshua together before the LORD often. Exo. 33:11 says, *his servant Joshua the son of Nun, a young man, did not depart from the tabernacle.* Joshua was qualified to serve because he was at home in the presence of the LORD.

b. **Now the LORD appeared:** This begins a solemn and important chapter in the history of God's people. This will be Moses' retirement ceremony and Joshua's inauguration ceremony.

2. (16-22) A song of Moses to warn Israel in a time of future apostasy.

And the LORD said to Moses: "Behold, you will rest with your fathers; and this people will rise and play the harlot with the gods of the foreigners of the land, where they go *to be* among them, and they will forsake Me and break My covenant which I have made with them. Then My anger shall be aroused against them in that day, and I will forsake them, and I will hide My face from them, and they shall be devoured. And many evils and troubles shall befall them, so that they will say in that day, 'Have not these evils come upon us because our God *is* not among us?'

And I will surely hide My face in that day because of all the evil which they have done, in that they have turned to other gods. Now therefore, write down this song for yourselves, and teach it to the children of Israel; put it in their mouths, that this song may be a witness for Me against the children of Israel. When I have brought them to the land flowing with milk and honey, of which I swore to their fathers, and they have eaten and filled themselves and grown fat, then they will turn to other gods and serve them; and they will provoke Me and break My covenant. Then it shall be, when many evils and troubles have come upon them, that this song will testify against them as a witness; for it will not be forgotten in the mouths of their descendants, for I know the inclination of their behavior today, even before I have brought them to the land of which I swore *to give them*." Therefore Moses wrote this song the same day, and taught it to the children of Israel.

a. **This people will rise and play the harlot with the gods of the foreigners of the land:** Because of this

future idolatry in Israel, God instructed Moses to compose sort of a national anthem for ancient Israel.

b. Therefore Moses wrote this song the same day, and taught it to the children of

Israel: Yet this was a strange national anthem, because the purpose of this anthem was to **testify against them as a witness**. God

knew that words are more memorable when set to music, so He told Moses to compose the sermon in a song found in the following chapter, Deuteronomy 32.

3. (23) The inauguration of Joshua.

Then He inaugurated Joshua the son of Nun, and said, "Be strong and of good courage; for you shall bring the children of Israel into the land of which I swore to them, and I will be with you."

a. Be strong and of good courage: It is remarkable how often this exhortation is directed towards Joshua. He hears it seven

different times (Deu. 31:6, 7, and 23; Jos. 1:6, 7, 9, and 18).

i. This exposes Joshua's weakness; there

was a *need* for such a command, because even a great leader like Joshua needed such encouragement.

ii. Most of us, God forgive us, are too big for God to use; we are too full of our own schemes and our own ways of doing things.

Joshua needed to take strength and courage in the LORD, and was small enough to be big in God.

iii. Wonderfully, the last time this phrase is used in connection with Joshua, *he* is encouraging *others* to *be strong and of good courage* (Jos. 10:25). He could encourage others with the encouragement the LORD, through others, had given him .

b. Be strong and of good courage: This was a manly way to speak to Joshua. God (and Moses) would not pander to

Joshua's weak and timid nature. He didn't hear, "Oh Joshua, you're so wonderful." "Oh Joshua, you're so strong."

"Oh Joshua, you're so courageous." Instead, he heard, "Now is the time. Step up to the challenge. **Be strong and of good courage!**"

c. You shall bring the children of Israel

into the land: Joshua, by nature weak and lacking courage, needed to hear this from Moses. He needed to hear, "You are going to do it. It is going to happen."

4. (24-27) Moses preserves the Law of God as a witness against Israel.

So it was, when Moses had completed writing the words of this law in a book, when they were finished, that Moses commanded the Levites,

who bore the ark of the covenant of the LORD,

saying: "Take this Book of the Law, and put it beside the ark of the covenant of the LORD your God, that it may be there as a witness against you; for I know your rebellion and your stiff neck. *If* today, while I am yet alive with you, you have been rebellious against the LORD, then how much more after my death?"

a. When Moses had completed writing the

words of this law: Moses finished the first five books of the Bible and gave this to Israel, and to all creation, as the inspired words of God.

i. Some raise objections at this point, wondering who wrote the last three chapters of Deuteronomy, because the text says that Moses finished here. No doubt, Joshua had the remainder of Moses' words and deeds recorded and added to the end of his magnificent work.

b. Put it beside the ark of the covenant: The Ten Commandments were placed inside the ark of the covenant (Heb. 9:4). But the whole

book of the law - Genesis through Deuteronomy
- was placed **beside the ark of the covenant**.

c. **That it may be there as a witness**

against you: Moses knew Israel would rebel.

He knew this both from the promise of God

(Deu. 31:16-17), and from common sense (**If**

today, while I am yet alive with you, you

have been rebellious against the LORD,

how much more after my death?).

Therefore the law would stand as a **witness**

against a rebellious Israel.

i. We love to find refuge in God's word in our times of stress and trouble, but we don't often consider that God's word, if we reject

Jesus and rebel against God, is no friend to

us. It is a **witness against** us, a witness that rises up to testify against us.

5. (28-30) The elders and officers of Israel gather for the song of Moses.

"Gather to me all the elders of your tribes, and your officers, that I may speak these words in their hearing and call heaven and earth to witness against them. For I know that after my death you will become utterly corrupt, and turn aside from the way which I have commanded you; and evil will befall you in the latter days, because you will do evil in the sight of the LORD, to provoke Him to anger through the work of your hands." Then Moses spoke in the hearing of all the assembly of Israel the words of this song until they were ended: a. **Then Moses spoke in the hearing of all**

the assembly of Israel the words of this

song until they were ended: "In fact, the song of chapter 32 is strongly reminiscent in its structure and content of a well-known secular political form, namely, the formulation of a

complaint against a rebel vassal by his overlord with the threat of punishment. It is not impossible that some, at least,

in Israel would have understood such a pattern and Moses would certainly have met it in the pharaoh's court." (Thompson)

© 2006 David Guzik - *No distribution beyond personal use without permission* **2** He said to them, "Today I am a hundred and twenty years old. I am no longer able to get about, and the LORD

has said to me, 'You will not cross the Jordan.' **3** As for the LORD your God, he is about to cross over before you; he will destroy these nations before you and dispossess them.

As for Joshua, he is about to cross before you just as the LORD has said. **4** The LORD will do to them just what he did to Sihon and Og, the Amorite kings, and to their land, which he destroyed. **5** The LORD will deliver them over to you and you will do to them according to the whole commandment I have given you. **6** Be strong and courageous! Do not fear or tremble before them, for the LORD your God is the one who is going with you. He will not fail you or abandon you!" **7** Then Moses called out to Joshua in the presence of all Israel, "Be strong and courageous, for you will accompany these people to the land that the LORD promised to give their ancestors, and you will enable them to inherit it. **8** The LORD is indeed going before you – he will be with you; he will not fail you or abandon you. Do not be afraid or discouraged!"

9 Then Moses wrote down this law and gave it to the Levitical priests, who carry the ark of the LORD's covenant, and to all Israel's elders. **10** He commanded them: "At the end of seven years, at the appointed time of the cancellation of debts, at the Feast of Temporary Shelters, **11** when all Israel comes to appear before the LORD your God in the place he chooses, you must read this law before them within their hearing. **12** Gather the people – men, women, and children, as well as the resident foreigners in your villages – so they may hear and thus learn about and fear the LORD your God and carefully obey all the words of this law. **13** Then their children, who have not known this law, will also

hear about and learn to fear the LORD your God for as long as you live in the land you are crossing the Jordan to possess.”

14 Then the LORD said to Moses, “The day of your death is near. Summon Joshua and present yourselves in the tent of meeting so that I can commission him.” So Moses and Joshua presented themselves in the tent of meeting. **15** The LORD appeared in the tent in a pillar of cloud that stood above the door of the tent. **16** Then the LORD said to Moses, “You are about to die, and then these people will begin to prostitute themselves with the foreign gods of the land into which they are going. They will reject me and break my covenant that I have made with them.

17 At that time my anger will erupt against them and I will abandon them and hide my face from them until they are devoured. Many disasters and distresses will overcome them so that they will say at that time, ‘Have not these disasters overcome us because our God is not among us?’

18 But I will certainly hide myself at that time because of all the wickedness they will have done by turning to other gods. **19** Now write down for yourselves the following song and teach it to the Israelites. Put it into their very mouths so that this song may serve as my witness against the Israelites! **20** For after I have brought them to the land I promised to their ancestors – one flowing with milk and honey – and they eat their fill and become fat, then they will turn to other gods and worship them; they will reject me and break my covenant. **21** Then when many disasters and distresses overcome them this song will testify against them, for their descendants will not forget it. I know the intentions they have in mind today, even before I bring them to the land I have promised.” **22** So on that day Moses wrote down this song and taught it to the Israelites, **23** and the LORD commissioned Joshua son of Nun, “Be strong and courageous, for you will take the Israelites to the land I have promised them, and I will be with you.”

24 When Moses finished writing on a scroll the words of this law in their entirety, **25** he commanded the Levites who carried the ark of the LORD's covenant, **26** "Take this scroll of the law and place it beside the ark of the covenant of the LORD your God. It will remain there as a witness against you, **27** for I know about your rebellion and stubbornness. Indeed, even while I have been living among you to this very day, you have rebelled against the LORD; you will be even more rebellious after my death! **28**

Gather to me all your tribal elders and officials so I can speak to them directly about these things and call the heavens and the earth to witness against them. **29** For I know that after I die you will totally corrupt yourselves and turn away from the path I have commanded you to walk.

Disaster will confront you in the days to come because you will act wickedly before the LORD, inciting him to anger because of your actions." **30** Then Moses recited the words of this song from start to finish in the hearing of the whole assembly of Israel.

1 Listen, O heavens, and I will speak; hear, O earth, the words of my mouth.

Guzik - Deuteronomy 32:1-52

Deuteronomy 32 - The Song of Moses

A. The song of Moses.

1. (1-4) Introduction.

Give ear, O heavens, and I will speak;
And hear, O earth, the words of my mouth.
Let my teaching drop as the rain,
My speech distill as the dew,
As raindrops on the tender herb,
And as showers on the grass.

For I proclaim the name of the LORD:

Ascribe greatness to our God.

He is the Rock, His work *is* perfect; For all His ways *are* justice, A God of truth and without injustice;
Righteous and upright *is* He.

a. **Give ear, O heavens . . . and hear, O**

earth: Moses began by asking for attention, not only from Israel, but from all of creation.

b. **I proclaim the name of the LORD:**

Ascribe greatness to our God: He then gave praise to God, both for who God is (**He is the Rock . . . Righteous and upright is He**) and for what God does (**His work is perfect; for all His ways are justice**).

2. (5-6) The accusation: The child has forsaken its father.

They have corrupted themselves;

They are not His children,

Because of their blemish:

A perverse and crooked generation.

Do you thus deal with the LORD,

O foolish and unwise people?

Is He not your Father, *who* bought you?

Has He not made you and established you?

a. **They have corrupted themselves:** Moses spoke as a witness against a rebellious Israel.

b. **Is He not your Father, who bought you?**

Has He not made you and established

you? Their sin is even more **foolish and unwise** in light of what God has done for them.

It is **foolish and unwise** to rebel against the God who has did so much for them.

3. (7-14) Moses recounts God's past faithfulness to Israel.

Remember the days of old,

Consider the years of many generations.

Ask your father, and he will show you;

Your elders, and they will tell you:

When the Most High divided their inheritance to the nations,

When He separated the sons of Adam,

He set the boundaries of the peoples

According to the number of the children of Israel.

For the Lord's portion *is* His people; Jacob *is* the place of His inheritance.

He found him in a desert land
And in the wasteland, a howling wilderness;
He encircled him, He instructed him,
He kept him as the apple of His eye.
As an eagle stirs up its nest,
Hovers over its young,
Spreading out its wings, taking them up,
Carrying them on its wings,
So the LORD alone led him,
And *there was* no foreign god with him.
He made him ride in the heights of the earth,
That he might eat the produce of the fields;
He made him draw honey from the rock,
And oil from the flinty rock;
Curds from the cattle, and milk of the flock,
With fat of lambs;
And rams of the breed of Bashan, and goats,
With the choicest wheat;
And you drank wine, the blood of the grapes.

a. **Remember the days of old:** Considering that this song was meant to be a *witness against* a rebellious Israel, Moses reminded Israel of all God's goodness to them. This was to both bring a greater conviction of sin, and to remind them of God's love and grace they could return to.

4. (15-18) Israel responded to God's kindness with apostasy.
But Jeshurun grew fat and kicked;
You grew fat, you grew thick,
You are obese!

Then he forsook God *who* made him,
And scornfully esteemed the Rock of his
salvation.

They provoked Him to jealousy with foreign
gods;

With abominations they provoked Him to anger.
They sacrificed to demons, not to God,
To gods they did not know,

To new *gods*, new arrivals

That your fathers did not fear.

Of the Rock *who* begot you, you are unmindful, And have forgotten the God who fathered you.

a. **Jeshurun**: This is a title for Israel, which literally means *the upright one* (Isa. 44:2).

b. **They sacrificed to demons**: In forsaking God, Israel turned to the pagan idols of the nations around them and actually worshipped

demons. There was a dark spiritual reality behind the idols of the nations, and Israel embraced that dark spiritual reality.

5. (19-27) God's reaction: Withdrawal from and punishment of Israel.

And when the LORD saw *it*, He spurned *them*, Because of the provocation of His sons and His daughters.

And He said: I will hide My face from them,

I will see what their end *will be*,

For they *are* a perverse generation,

Children in whom *is* no faith.

They have provoked Me to jealousy by *what* is not God; They have moved Me to anger by their foolish idols.

But I will provoke them to jealousy by *those who are* not a nation; I will move them to anger by a foolish nation.

For a fire is kindled by my anger,

And shall burn to the lowest hell;

It shall consume the earth with her increase,

And set on fire the foundations of the mountains.

I will heap disasters on them;

I will spend My arrows on them.

They shall be wasted with hunger,

Devoured by pestilence and bitter destruction; I will also send against them the teeth of beasts, With the poison of serpents of the dust.

The sword shall destroy outside;

There shall be terror within
For the young man and virgin,
The nursing child with the man of gray hairs.
I would have said, "I will dash them in pieces, I will make the
memory of them to cease from among men,"
Had I not feared the wrath of the enemy,
Lest their adversaries should misunderstand,
Lest they should say, "Our hand *is* high; And it is not the
LORD who has done all this."

a. **I will hide My face from them:** When
God's people forsake Him, He withdraws the
intimacy of His presence. At first, this is
sometimes seen as a relief, because the
conviction of sin is not so great. But then the darkness and
desperation sets in.

b. **I will heap disasters upon them:** When the hiding of
His face does not draw God's people into repentance, God
then sends His
hand of correction, and allows calamity to bring the
attention of His people back upon Him.

6. (28-43) The LORD states His case and makes a plea unto
Israel.

For they *are* a nation void of counsel, Nor *is there any*
understanding in them.

Oh, that they were wise, *that* they understood this,

That they would consider their latter end!

How could one chase a thousand,

And two put ten thousand to flight,

Unless their Rock had sold them,

And the LORD had surrendered them?

For their rock *is* not like our Rock,

Even our enemies themselves *being* judges.

For their vine *is* of the vine of Sodom And of the fields of
Gomorrah; Their grapes *are* grapes of gall,

Their clusters *are* bitter.

Their wine *is* the poison of serpents, And the cruel venom of cobras.

Is this not laid up in store with Me, Sealed up among My treasures?

Vengeance is Mine, and recompense;

Their foot shall slip in *due* time;

For the day of their calamity *is* at hand, And the things to come hasten upon them.'

For the LORD will judge His people

And have compassion on His servants,

When He sees that *their* power is gone, And *there is* no one *remaining*, bond or free.

He will say: 'Where *are* their gods,

The rock in which they sought refuge?

Who ate the fat of their sacrifices,

And drank the wine of their drink offering?

Let them rise and help you,

And be your refuge.

Now see that I, *even I, am* He, And *there is* no God besides Me; I kill and I make alive; I wound and I heal;

Nor *is there any* who can deliver from My hand.

For I raise My hand to heaven,

And say, "As I live forever,

If I whet My glittering sword,

And My hand takes hold on judgment,

I will render vengeance to My enemies,

And repay those who hate Me.

I will make My arrows drunk with blood,

And My sword shall devour flesh,

With the blood of the slain and the captives,

From the heads of the leaders of the enemy."

Rejoice, O Gentiles, *with* His people; For He will avenge the blood of His servants, And render vengeance to His adversaries;

He will provide atonement for His land *and* His people.

a. **That they would consider their latter**

end: This can be a remarkably effective preventative to backsliding. When we are in a backslidden state, we should consider where it will lead us.

b. **And have compassion on His servants:** When we are in a backslidden state, we should also see the compassion of God we *could* receive.

c. **There is no God besides Me:** When we are in a backslidden state, we should see the greatness of God. The backslidden man needs to know more of God's His character and nature.

7. (44-47) Moses encourages Israel.

So Moses came with Joshua the son of Nun and spoke all the words of this song in the hearing of the people. Moses finished speaking all these words to all Israel, and He said to them: "Set your hearts on all the words which I testify among you today, which you shall command your children to be careful to observe; all the words of this law. For it *is* not a futile thing for you, because it *is* your life, and by this word you shall prolong *your* days in the land which you cross over the Jordan to possess."

a. **It is not a futile thing:** One of Satan's great lies to us is that it is **a futile thing** to serve God and obey His word. It often seems that those who are against God prosper more than those who are for Him. Yet, we need to see and understand - from an eternal perspective - that **it is not a futile thing** to love and obey God.

8. (48-52) God's final command to Moses.

Then the LORD spoke to Moses that very same day, saying: "Go up this mountain of the Abarim, Mount Nebo, which *is* in the land of Moab, across from Jericho; view the land of Canaan, which I give to the children of Israel as a possession; and die on the mountain which you ascend, and be gathered to your people, just as Aaron your

brother died on Mount Hor and was gathered to his people; because you trespassed against Me among the children of Israel at the waters of Meribah Kadesh, in the Wilderness of Zin, because you did not hallow Me in the midst of the children of Israel. Yet you shall see the land before *you*, though you shall not go there, into the land which I am giving to the children of Israel."

a. **Go up this mountain . . . and die on the mountain:**

Moses, as the last act of his 120 years, will climb Mount Nebo, and die at the summit of the mountain.

b. **You shall see the land before you, though you shall not go there:** Though Moses will not be allowed to cross the Jordan and enter the Promised Land, he can **view the land of Canaan**.

© 2006 David Guzik - No distribution beyond personal use without permission **2** My teaching will drop like the rain, my sayings will drip like the dew, as rain drops upon the grass, and showers upon new growth.

3 For I will proclaim the name of the LORD; you must acknowledge the greatness of our God.

4 As for the Rock, his work is perfect, for all his ways are just.

He is a reliable God who is never unjust, he is fair and upright. **5** His people have been unfaithful to him; they have not acted like his children – this is their sin. They are a perverse and deceitful generation.

6 Is this how you repay the LORD, you foolish, unwise people?

Is he not your father, your creator?

He has made you and established you.

7 Remember the ancient days; bear in mind the years of past generations. Ask your father and he will inform you,

your elders, and they will tell you.

8 When the Most High gave the nations their inheritance,
when he divided up humankind,
he set the boundaries of the peoples,
according to the number of the heavenly assembly.

9 For the LORD's allotment is his people, Jacob is his special possession.

10 The LORD found him in a desolate land, in an empty wasteland where animals howl.

He continually guarded him and taught him;
he continually protected him like the pupil of his eye.

11 Like an eagle that stirs up its nest, that hovers over its young, so the LORD spread out his wings and took him, he lifted him up on his pinions.

12 The LORD alone was guiding him, no foreign god was with him.

13 He enabled him to travel over the high terrain of the land, and he ate of the produce of the fields.

He provided honey for him from the cliffs,
and olive oil from the hardest of rocks,

14 butter from the herd
and milk from the flock,
along with the fat of lambs,
rams and goats of Bashan,
along with the best of the kernels of wheat;
and from the juice of grapes you drank wine.

15 But Jeshurun became fat and kicked, you got fat, thick, and stuffed!

Then he deserted the God who made him,
and treated the Rock who saved him with contempt.

16 They made him jealous with other gods, they enraged him with abhorrent idols.

17 They sacrificed to demons, not God, to gods they had not known; to new gods who had recently come along, gods your ancestors had not known about.

18 You have forgotten the Rock who fathered you, and put out of mind the God who gave you birth.

19 But the LORD took note and despised them because his sons and daughters enraged him.

20 He said, "I will reject them,
I will see what will happen to them;
for they are a perverse generation,
children who show no loyalty.

21 They have made me jealous with false gods, enraging me with their worthless gods; so I will make them jealous with a people they do not recognize,
with a nation slow to learn I will enrage them.

22 For a fire has been kindled by my anger, and it burns to lowest Sheol; it consumes the earth and its produce,
and ignites the foundations of the mountains.

23 I will increase their disasters, I will use up my arrows on them.

24 They will be starved by famine, eaten by plague, and bitterly stung; I will send the teeth of wild animals against them, along with the poison of creatures that crawl in the dust.

25 The sword will make people childless outside, and terror will do so inside; they will destroy both the young man and the virgin, the infant and the gray-haired man.

26 "I said, 'I want to cut them in pieces.
I want to make people forget they ever existed.

27 But I fear the reaction of their enemies, for their adversaries would misunderstand and say, "Our power is great,
and the LORD has not done all this!"

28 They are a nation devoid of wisdom, and there is no understanding among them.

29 I wish that they were wise and could understand this, and that they could comprehend what will happen to them."

30 How can one man chase a thousand of them, and two pursue ten thousand; unless their Rock had delivered them

up,
and the LORD had handed them over?

31 For our enemies' rock is not like our Rock, as even our enemies concede.

32 For their vine is from the stock of Sodom, and from the fields of Gomorrah.

Their grapes contain venom,
their clusters of grapes are bitter.

33 Their wine is snakes' poison,
the deadly venom of cobras.

34 "Is this not stored up with me?" says the LORD, "Is it not sealed up in my storehouses?"

35 I will get revenge and pay them back at the time their foot slips; for the day of their disaster is near,
and the impending judgment is rushing upon them!"

36 The LORD will judge his people, and will change his plans concerning his servants; when he sees that their power has disappeared, and that no one is left, whether confined or set free.

37 He will say, "Where are their gods, the rock in whom they sought security, **38** who ate the best of their sacrifices, and drank the wine of their drink offerings?

Let them rise and help you;
let them be your refuge!

39 "See now that I, indeed I, am he!" says the LORD, "and there is no other god besides me.

I kill and give life,
I smash and I heal,
and none can resist my power.

40 For I raise up my hand to heaven, and say, 'As surely as I live forever, **41** I will sharpen my lightning-like sword, and my hand will grasp hold of the weapon of judgment;

I will execute vengeance on my foes,
and repay those who hate me!

42 I will make my arrows drunk with blood, and my sword will devour flesh – the blood of the slaughtered and

captured,
the chief of the enemy's leaders!"

43 Cry out, O nations, with his people, for he will avenge his servants' blood; he will take vengeance against his enemies, and make atonement for his land and people.

44 Then Moses went with Joshua son of Nun and recited all the words of this song to the people. **45** When Moses finished reciting all these words to all Israel **46** he said to them, "Keep in mind all the words I am solemnly proclaiming to you today; you must command your children to observe carefully all the words of this law. **47**

For this is no idle word for you – it is your life! By this word you will live a long time in the land you are about to cross the Jordan to possess."

48 Then the LORD said to Moses that same day, **49** "Go up to this Abarim hill country, to Mount Nebo (which is in the land of Moab opposite Jericho) and look at the land of Canaan that I am giving to the Israelites as a possession.

50 You will die on the mountain that you ascend and join your deceased ancestors, just as Aaron your brother died on Mount Hor and joined his deceased ancestors, **51** for both of you rebelled against me among the Israelites at the waters of Meribah Kadesh in the desert of Zin when you did not show me proper respect among the Israelites.

52 You will see the land before you, but you will not enter the land that I am giving to the Israelites."

1 This is the blessing Moses the man of God pronounced upon the Israelites before his death.

Guzik - Deuteronomy 33:1-29

Deuteronomy 33 - Moses Blesses the Tribes

A. Introduction to the blessing of the tribes.

1. (1) **Now this is the blessing . . .**

Now this *is* the blessing with which Moses the man of God blessed the children of Israel before his death.

a. **Moses the man of God:** As he looked at Israel with a shepherd's heart, he could not leave them without blessing

them. It must be this way. Moses could not leave this earth without a final blessing of the people he has loved and served in the LORD for these 40 years.

b. This chapter is similar in its effect to the blessing of Israel (Jacob) upon his twelve sons as recorded in Genesis 49. Since Moses was the one who recorded the blessing of Israel in Genesis 49, it is not a stretch to think he consciously modeled his blessing on Jacob's previous one.

2. (2-5) The context is set: The glory of God's revelation to Israel.

And he said:

"The LORD came from Sinai,
And dawned on them from Seir;
He shone forth from Mount Paran,
And He came with ten thousands of saints;
From His right hand *Came* a fiery law for them.
Yes, He loves the people;
All His saints *are* in Your hand;
They sit down at Your feet;
Everyone receives Your words.
Moses commanded a law for us,
A heritage of the congregation of Jacob.
And He was King in Jeshurun,
When the leaders of the people were gathered,
All the tribes of Israel together."

a. **The LORD came from Sinai:** In the midst of images of God's glory in revealing Himself and His word to Israel (**He shone . . . with ten thousands of saints . . . a fiery law . . . He was King**). This adds a sense of drama and grandeur to Moses' prophetic words to each tribe.

B. The blessing of the individual tribes.

1. (6) Reuben: **Nor let his men be few.**

Let Reuben live, and not die,

Nor let his men be few.

a. **Let Reuben live:** This is a general blessing for the tribe of Reuben. Moses prayed, " **Nor let his men be few,**" asking that the tribe of Reuben be blessed with growth.

b. **Live and not die:** This tepid blessing is in line with Jacob's prophecy concerning the tribe of Reuben (*you shall not excel*, Gen. 49:4). The tribe of Reuben never did excel; as far as we know, there never came a prophet, a judge, or a king from the tribe of Reuben.

2. (7) Judah: **May You be a help.**

And this he said of Judah:

"Hear, LORD, the voice of Judah,
And bring him to his people;
Let his hands be sufficient for him,
And may You be a help against his enemies."

a. **Hear, LORD, the voice of Judah:** Since the name **Judah** means *praise*, Moses prayed that the LORD would hear the *voice of praise*.

b. **Let his hands be sufficient:** Essentially, Moses prayed for the blessing and sustaining of the tribe of Judah, no doubt until it could fulfill its prophetic destiny to bring forth the Messiah.

i. Moses knew this destiny for the tribe of Judah from Jacob's prophecy in Gen. 49:10:

The scepter shall not depart from Judah.

3. (8-11) Levi: **They shall teach . . . Israel Your law.**

And of Levi he said:

" *Let Your Thummim and Your Urim be with Your holy one,*
Whom You tested at Massah,
And with whom You contended at the waters of
Meribah,

Who says of his father and mother, 'I have not seen them';
Nor did he acknowledge his brothers,
Or know his own children;

For they have observed Your word
And kept Your covenant.

They shall teach Jacob Your judgments,
And Israel Your law.
They shall put incense before You,
And a whole burnt sacrifice on Your altar.
Bless his substance, LORD,
And accept the work of his hands;
Strike the loins of those who rise against him, And of those
who hate him, that they rise not again."

a. They have observed Your word and kept

Your covenant: Because of this, Levi had a blessed place among the tribes of Israel. Moses prayed that the **substance** of Levi would be blessed and that their enemies would be defeated.

b. They shall teach Jacob Your judgments,

and Israel Your law: Especially, Levi had the blessed place of teaching Israel the word of God. They would accomplish this as they were scattered in Israel, as Jacob had prophesied (Gen. 49:7).

i. The prophecy *I will divide them in Jacob and scatter them in Israel* (in Gen. 49:7) was given to both the tribes of Simeon and Levi. For the tribe of Levi it was a blessing, as they were scattered throughout the nation to minister to the people and to bring God's word to the whole nation. For the tribe of Simeon, the scattering was a significant curse; they are not even mentioned among the tribes being blessed here.

4. (12) Benjamin: The beloved of the LORD.

Of Benjamin he said:

"The beloved of the LORD shall dwell in safety by Him,
Who shelters him all the day long;
And he shall dwell between His shoulders."

a. The beloved of the LORD: The place of special love and blessing Benjamin had would be prophetically fulfilled in a

Benjaminite city becoming the center of the nation - Jerusalem.

b. **Shall dwell in safety by Him:** Thus, though the tribe of Benjamin was indeed fierce and warlike (Jacob's prophecy described Benjamin as a *ravenous wolf*, Gen. 49:27), the tribe was greatly **beloved of the LORD**.

5. (13-17) Joseph: **Let the blessing come.**

And of Joseph he said:

"Blessed of the LORD *is* his land, With the precious things of heaven, with the dew,

And the deep lying beneath,

With the precious fruits of the sun,

With the precious produce of the months,

With the best things of the ancient mountains, With the precious things of the everlasting hills, With the precious things of the earth and its fullness,

And the favor of Him who dwelt in the bush.

Let *the blessing* come 'on the head of Joseph, And on the crown of the head of him *who was* separate from his brothers.'

His glory *is like* a firstborn bull,

And his horns *like* the horns of the wild ox; Together with them He shall push the peoples To the ends of the earth;

They *are* the ten thousands of Ephraim, And they *are* the thousands of Manasseh."

a. **Blessed of the LORD is his land:** The two tribes of Joseph - **Ephraim** and **Manasseh** -

were indeed blessed numerically in Israel. The descendants of this one son among twelve sons of Jacob were far more numerous than all the other tribes.

b. **Ten thousands of Ephraim . . .**

thousands of Manasseh: This fulfilled Jacob's prophecy in Gen. 49:22 (*Joseph is a fruitful bough, a fruitful bough by a well; his branches run over the wall*).

6. (18-19) Zebulun and Issachar: **They shall partake of the abundance of the seas.**

And of Zebulun he said:

"Rejoice, Zebulun, in your going out,

And Issachar in your tents!

They shall call the peoples *to* the mountain; There they shall offer sacrifices of righteousness; For they shall partake *of* the abundance of the seas And *of* treasures hidden in the sand."

a. **They shall partake of the abundance of**

the seas: Both the tribes of Zebulun and Issachar were in the Galilee region, and were blessed to take advantage of the Sea of Galilee.

b. **Treasures hidden in the sand:** This is consistent with what Jacob said of Zebulun in Gen. 49:13 (*Zebulun shall dwell by the haven of the sea*).

7. (20-21) Gad: **He dwells as a lion.**

And of Gad he said:

"Blessed *is* he who enlarges Gad; He dwells as a lion, And tears the arm and the crown of his head.

He provided the first *part* for himself, Because a lawgiver's portion was reserved there.

He came *with* the heads of the people; He administered the justice of the LORD, And His judgments with Israel."

a. **He dwells as a lion:** The lion-like character of the tribe of Gad was shown by the fact that Gad furnished many fine troops for David (1Ch.

12:14). This is in fulfillment of Jacob's words in Gen. 49:19: *he shall triumph at last*.

8. (22) Dan: **A lion's whelp.**

And of Dan he said:

"Dan *is* a lion's whelp;

He shall leap from Bashan."

a. **He shall leap from Bashan:** This may not be a complimentary phrase. History records that Dan was a

troublesome tribe. They were the tribe to introduce idolatry into Israel (Jdg.

18:30); Jeroboam set up one of his idolatrous golden calves in Dan (1Ki. 12:26-30), and later Dan became a center of idol worship in Israel (Amo. 8:14). Indeed, Jacob said of Dan in Gen.

49:17, *Dan shall be a serpent by the way.*

b. **From Bashan:** The tribe of Dan originally was allotted land in the southern part of Israel, but migrated to the north hundreds of years after this (Judges 18). Moses' reference to **Bashan** (a region in northern Israel) prophetically anticipated this migration.

9. (23) Naphtali: **Full of the blessing of the LORD.**

And of Naphtali he said:

"O Naphtali, satisfied with favor,
And full of the blessing of the LORD,
Possess the west and the south."

a. **O Naphtali, satisfied with favor:** The tribe of Naphtali was indeed **satisfied with favor**.

Naphtali's land was in a key portion near the Sea of Galilee, the region where Jesus did much of His teaching and ministry. No wonder Moses says this tribe is **full of the blessing of the LORD**, and that Jacob said of Naphtali in Gen.

49:21, *he gives goodly words.*

10. (24-25) Asher: **Most blessed of sons.**

And of Asher he said:

"Asher *is* most blessed of sons;
Let him be favored by his brothers,
And let him dip his foot in oil.

Your sandals *shall be* iron and bronze; As your days, *so shall* your strength *be*. "

a. **Asher is most blessed of sons:** The abundance of the tribe of Asher was also expressed by Jacob in Gen. 49:20 (*he shall yield royal dainties*).

11. (26-29) Conclusion: **Happy are you, O Israel!**

"There is no one like the God of Jeshurun, Who rides the heavens to help you, And in His excellency on the clouds.

The eternal God is your refuge,

And underneath are the everlasting arms; He will thrust out the enemy from before you, And will say, 'Destroy!'

Then Israel shall dwell in safety,

The fountain of Jacob alone,

In a land of grain and new wine;

His heavens shall also drop dew.

Happy are you, O Israel!

Who is like you, a people saved by the LORD, The shield of your help And the sword of your majesty!

Your enemies shall submit to you,

And you shall tread down their high places."

a. **The eternal God is your refuge:** What blessing God bestowed on Israel! As Paul said in Rom. 3:2: *To them were committed the*

oracles of God. The true greatness of Israel is the same as the greatness of the Christian: not in and of themselves, but in their God: **There is no one like the God of Jeshurun.**

b. **Who rides the heavens to help you:** God is great and uses His greatness on behalf of His people, upholding them with **the everlasting arms**. When we are **a people saved by the LORD**, it means that God is for us and heaven is on our side! *If God is for us, who can be against us?* (Rom. 8:31) He is **the shield of your help**.

© 2006 David Guzik - No distribution beyond personal use without permission **2** He said:

The LORD came from Sinai

and revealed himself to Israel from Seir.

He appeared in splendor from Mount Paran,

and came forth with ten thousand holy ones.

With his right hand he gave a fiery law to them.

3 Surely he loves the people;

all your holy ones are in your power.

And they sit at your feet,
each receiving your words.

4 Moses delivered to us a law,
an inheritance for the assembly of Jacob. **5** The LORD was
king over Jeshurun, when the leaders of the people
assembled,
the tribes of Israel together.

6 May Reuben live and not die,
and may his people multiply.

7 And this is the blessing to Judah. He said, Listen, O LORD,
to Judah's voice, and bring him to his people.
May his power be great,
and may you help him against his foes.

8 Of Levi he said:

Your Thummim and Urim belong to your godly one, whose
authority you challenged at Massah, and with whom you
argued at the waters of Meribah.

9 He said to his father and mother, "I have not seen him,"
and he did not acknowledge his own brothers
or know his own children,
for they kept your word,
and guarded your covenant.

10 They will teach Jacob your ordinances and Israel your
law; they will offer incense as a pleasant odor,
and a whole offering on your altar.

11 Bless, O LORD, his goods,
and be pleased with his efforts;
undercut the legs of any who attack him,
and of those who hate him, so that they cannot stand.

12 Of Benjamin he said:

The beloved of the LORD will live safely by him; he protects
him all the time,
and the LORD places him on his chest.

13 Of Joseph he said:

May the LORD bless his land

with the harvest produced by the sky, by the dew, and by the depths crouching beneath; **14** with the harvest produced by the daylight and by the moonlight; **15** with the best of the ancient mountains and the harvest produced by the age-old hills; **16** with the harvest of the earth and its fullness and the pleasure of him who resided in the burning bush.

May blessing rest on Joseph's head,
and on the top of the head of the one set apart from his brothers.

17 May the firstborn of his bull bring him honor, and may his horns be those of a wild ox; with them may he gore all peoples,
all the far reaches of the earth.

They are the ten thousands of Ephraim,
and they are the thousands of Manasseh.

18 Of Zebulun he said:

Rejoice, Zebulun, when you go outside,
and Issachar, when you are in your tents.

19 They will summon peoples to the mountain, there they will sacrifice proper sacrifices; for they will enjoy the abundance of the seas, and the hidden treasures of the shores.

20 Of Gad he said:

Blessed be the one who enlarges Gad.
Like a lioness he will dwell;
he will tear at an arm – indeed, a scalp.

21 He has selected the best part for himself, for the portion of the ruler is set aside there; he came with the leaders of the people, he obeyed the righteous laws of the LORD and his ordinances with Israel.

22 Of Dan he said:

Dan is a lion's cub;
he will leap forth from Bashan.

23 Of Naphtali he said:

O Naphtali, overflowing with favor,

and full of the LORD's blessing,
possess the west and south.

24 Of Asher he said:

Asher is blessed with children,
may he be favored by his brothers
and may he dip his foot in olive oil.

25 The bars of your gates will be made of iron and bronze,
and may you have lifelong strength.

26 There is no one like God, O Jeshurun, who rides through
the sky to help you, on the clouds in majesty.

27 The everlasting God is a refuge, and underneath you are
his eternal arms; he has driven out enemies before you,
and has said, "Destroy!"

28 Israel lives in safety,
the fountain of Jacob is quite secure,
in a land of grain and new wine;
indeed, its heavens rain down dew.

29 You have joy, Israel! Who is like you?
You are a people delivered by the LORD,
your protective shield
and your exalted sword.

May your enemies cringe before you;
may you trample on their backs.

1 Then Moses ascended from the deserts of Moab to Mount
Nebo, to the summit of Pisgah, which is opposite Jericho. The
LORD showed him the whole land – Gilead to Dan, Guzik -
Deuteronomy 34:1-12

Deuteronomy 34 - The Death of Moses

A. Moses on Mount Nebo.

1. (1-3) The vision of the Promised Land.

Then Moses went up from the plains of Moab to
Mount Nebo, to the top of Pisgah, which is across from
Jericho. And the LORD showed him all the land of Gilead as
far as Dan, all Naphtali and the land of Ephraim and
Manasseh, all the land of Judah as far as the Western Sea,

the South, and the plain of the Valley of Jericho, the city of palm trees, as far as Zoar.

a. **Then Moses went up from the plains of**

Moab to Mount Nebo: As Israel camped on the **plains of Moab**, Moses climbed the heights of **Mount Nebo** - from which he could see the Promised Land, **as far as the Western Sea**.

i. Today, we know **Mount Nebo** and

Pisgah as two separate mountain peaks.

But in Moses' day, the same names were probably given to the same summit. **Pisgah** is the higher of the two, and it is probably from the peak that today is called **Pisgah** that Moses saw the Promised Land.

b. **And the LORD showed him all the land:** This was God's sweet grace to Moses. Though he could not set foot in the Promised Land, God allowed him to see it.

2. (4) God's last words to Moses: **This is the land . . .**

Then the LORD said to him, "This *is* the land of which I swore to give Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, saying, 'I will give it to your descendants.' I have caused you to see *it* with your eyes, but you shall not cross over there."

a. **This is the land of which I swore to**

give: These words, being in the present tense, were spoken to Moses at the summit of Mount Nebo as he looked westward and saw the Promised Land.

i. The list of places here follows a large counter-clockwise circle from the north to the south. In this sweeping panorama, Moses saw the sweep of the entire Promised Land.

ii. "The invitation to Moses to view the land was not merely a kindly provision of God to allow His servant to view Israel's inheritance.

It may have had some legal significance.

There is some evidence that this was part of a legal process. A man 'viewed' what he was to possess." (Thompson)

b. **I will give it to your descendants:** God **swore** to give it to the descendants of **Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob**, and now the

promise was going to be fulfilled. Moses was allowed to take the descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob up to the threshold of the Promised Land, but no further.

c. **I have caused you to see it with your eyes, but you shall not cross over there:** What a bitter-sweet moment! Moses saw this, and his heart was thrilled at being able to see the Promised Land as never before. Yet, there no doubt a sadness in His heart, knowing that it was his own sin - his own misrepresentation of God - which led to his not being able to set foot in the Promised Land himself. Here he stood so close, yet so far away.

i. "What drama! What pathos! What inward pain! What sense of accomplishment mixed with disappointment must have been in Moses' mind as he looked over the land the Lord had promised to Israel!" (Kalland)

ii. Looking out over the vast panorama, on what must have been a crystal clear day, Moses saw the end result of his life's work - leading the children of Israel into the Promised Land - and heard God say, as clearly as he had ever heard God speak,

this is the land.

3. (5-8) The death and burial of Moses, **the servant of the LORD.**

So Moses the servant of the LORD died there in the land of Moab, according to the word of the LORD. And He buried him in a valley in the land of Moab, opposite Beth Peor; but no one knows his grave to this day. Moses *was* one hundred and

twenty years old when he died. His eyes were not dim nor his natural vigor diminished.

And the children of Israel wept for Moses in the plains of Moab thirty days. So the days of weeping *and* mourning for Moses ended.

a. **So Moses the servant of the LORD died there in the land of Moab:** Moses' epitaph - the line on his tombstone - was simple.

- It was not "Moses, Prince of Egypt."
- It was not "Moses, Murderer of an Egyptian."
- It was not "Moses, Shepherd in the Wilderness."
- It was not "Moses, Spokesman for a Nation."
- It was not "Moses, Miracle Worker."
- It was not "Moses, Prophet."
- It was not "Moses, the Man Who Saw a Piece of God's Glory."
- It was not "Moses, Who Never Entered the Promised Land."
- At the end of it all, the title was simple:

Moses the servant of the LORD.

i. This should be enough for us. We often *say* it, and it sounds so humble to *say* it, but it is much higher to really live it. To be satisfied with simply being **the servant of**

the LORD is a precious place indeed. It is the happiest of all stations in life, for when the Master is glorified, the servants are satisfied.

ii. If one is truly a **servant of the LORD**, it can be demonstrated by a simple test: by how they react when someone *treats* them as a servant. Many are pleased to be servants for people of our own choosing or in circumstances of our own choosing. But that isn't really being **the servant of the LORD**.

b. Moses the servant of the LORD died:

Moses died just as God promised. The promises of God are sure, including His more severe promises. It all happened **according to the word of the LORD**.

i. Literally, the phrase **according to the word of the LORD** means *upon the mouth of the LORD*. From this, ancient Jewish traditions say that Moses died as God took away his soul with a kiss. The medieval Jewish rabbi Maimonides says that of the 903 different ways to die, this was the best.

ii. "In the meanwhile, Moses' time was at an end. A voice from heaven resounded, saying: 'Why, Moses, dost thou strive in

vain? Thy last second is at hand.' Moses instantly stood up for prayer, and said: 'Lord of the world! Be mindful of the day on which Thou didst reveal Thyself to me in the bush

of thorns, and be mindful also of the day when I ascended into heaven and during forty days partook of neither food nor drink. Thou, Gracious and Merciful, deliver me not into the hand of [Satan].' God replied: 'I have heard thy prayer. I Myself shall attend to thee and bury thee.' Moses now sanctified himself as do the Seraphim that surround the Divine Majesty, whereupon God from the highest heavens revealed Himself to receive Moses' soul. When Moses beheld the Holy One, blessed be His Name, he fell upon his face and said: 'Lord of the world! In love didst Thou create the world, and in love Thou guidest it. Treat me also with love, and deliver me not into the hands of the Angel of Death.' A heavenly voice sounded and said:

'Moses, be not afraid. "Thy righteousness shall go before thee; the glory of the Lord shall be thy rearward.'""

"With God descended from heaven three angels, Michael, Gabriel, and Zagzagel. Gabriel arranged Moses' couch, Michael spread upon it a purple garment, and Zagzagel laid down a woolen pillow. God stationed Himself over Moses' head, Michael to his right, Gabriel to his left, and Zagzagel at his feet, whereupon God addressed Moses: 'Cross thy feet,' and Moses did so.

He then said, 'Fold thy hands and lay them upon thy breast,' and Moses did so. Then God said, 'Close thine eyes,' and Moses did so. Then God spake to Moses' soul: 'My daughter, one hundred and twenty years had I decreed that thou shouldst dwell in this righteous man's body, but hesitate not now to leave it, for thy time has run. . . . I Myself shall take thee to the highest heavens and let thee dwell under the Throne

of My Glory' . . . When Moses heard these words, he permitted his soul to leave him, saying to her: 'Return to thy rest, O my soul, for the Lord hath dealt bountifully with thee.'

God thereupon took Moses' soul by kissing him on the mouth." (Ginzberg, *Legends of the Jews*) iii. "As a mother takes her child and kisses it, and then lays it down to sleep in its own bed; so did the Lord kiss the soul of Moses away to be with him for ever, and then he hid his body we know not where." (Spurgeon) c. **And He buried him in a valley:** Notably, the LORD buried Moses. This was more complicated than it sounds, because there was

a Satanic contention over the body of Moses.

i. Jude 9 speaks of an occasion when

Michael the archangel, in contending with the devil, when he disputed about the body of Moses. Apparently, there was a contention over the body of Moses, and

according to Jude Michael the archangel won this contest as he appealed to the Lord's authority: *"The Lord rebuke you!"* Yet *why* Michael contended with Satan over the body of Moses is less clear.

ii. Some say that the Devil wanted to use Moses' body as an object of worship to lead Israel astray into idolatry. Others think that Satan wanted to desecrate the body of Moses, and claimed a right to it because

Moses had murdered an Egyptian.

iii. But consider that God had another purpose for Moses' body, which Satan wanted to defeat: Moses appears in bodily form with Elijah (whose body was caught up to heaven [2 Kings 2]) at the Transfiguration (Mat. 17:1-3); and perhaps Moses and Elijah are the two witnesses of Revelation 11.

iv. Apparently, God had a purpose to fulfill with the body of Moses before the time of general resurrection, so God made special provision to bury the body of Moses Himself. And, perhaps, God preserved the body of Moses in some way. God wanted to protect the body of Moses, so **no one knows his grave to this day**. Seemingly, they searched for it, as would be expected, out of a desire to memorialize this great leader of the nation.

d. **Moses was one hundred and twenty years old when he died**: Moses' life was neatly divided into thirds. He spent 40 years as the crown prince of Egypt, 40 years as a humble shepherd in the wilderness, and 40

years leading the children of Israel to their destiny in the Promised Land. The first two-thirds were in preparation for the last one third. Moses was willing to let God prepare him for 80 years.

e. His eyes were not dim nor his natural

vigor abated: This confirmed what was observed at Deu. 31:1 (*I can no longer go out and come in*). Moses was not hindered by physical infirmity, but by the command of God.

f. The children of Israel wept . . . the days of weeping and mourning for Moses ended. As great as Moses was, the days of mourning for him ended. It was time to move on. God's program did not end with Moses, nor does it end with any man. The torch is passed and God's work goes on.

B. The legacy of Moses.

1. (9) Joshua's leadership in Israel.

Now Joshua the son of Nun was full of the spirit of wisdom, for Moses had laid his hands on him; so the children of Israel heeded him, and did as the LORD had commanded Moses.

a. For Moses had laid his hands on him: Moses' prayer for Joshua was answered. Joshua was indeed **full of the spirit of wisdom**. Best of all, **the children of Israel heeded him**.

The real test of leadership is to see if people actually follow you.

2. (10-12) The unique legacy of Moses.

But since then there has not arisen in Israel a prophet like Moses, whom the LORD knew face to face, in all the signs and wonders which the LORD sent him to do in the land of Egypt, before Pharaoh, before all his servants, and in all his land, and by all that mighty power and all the great terror which Moses performed in the sight of all Israel.

a. Since then there has not arisen in Israel a prophet like Moses: Joshua was a capable leader for Israel, and

God's work went on, but that did not diminish Moses' unique legacy.

b. Since then there has not arisen in Israel a prophet like Moses: Several things made Moses unique.

i. Whom the LORD knew face to face:

Moses was unique because of his personal intimacy with God. The term **face to face** does not literally mean "physical face to physical face," but it has the idea of free and unhindered communication. Moses had a remarkably intimate relationship with God.

ii. All the signs and wonders with the LORD sent him to do: Moses was unique in the number and kind of miraculous works he was associated with.

iii. All that mighty power and all the great terror which Moses performed:

Moses was unique in the power and authority with which we led the nation of Israel.

c. Since then there has not arisen in Israel a prophet like Moses: There were greater rulers over Israel than Moses, greater leaders, greater prophets, and greater priests. But before the coming of Jesus Christ the Messiah, there was never one man who held all offices so gloriously as Moses did.

i. "In him were concentrated all the great offices of Israel - prophet, ruler, judge and priest. If some who held these offices were

great, Moses was the greatest of them all." (Thompson)

© 2006 David Guzik - No distribution beyond personal use without permission **2** and all of Naphtali, the land of Ephraim and Manasseh, all the land of Judah as far as the distant sea, **3** the Negev, and the plain of the valley of Jericho, the city of the date palm trees, as far as Zoar. **4** Then the LORD said to him, "This is the land I promised to

Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob when I said, 'I will give it to your descendants.' I have let you see it, but you will not cross over there." **5** So Moses, the servant of the LORD, died there in the land of Moab as the LORD had said. **6** He buried him in the land of Moab near Beth Peor, but no one knows his exact burial place to this very day. **7** Moses was 120 years old when he died, but his eye was not dull nor had his vitality departed. **8**

The Israelites mourned for Moses in the deserts of Moab for thirty days; then the days of mourning for Moses ended.

9 Now Joshua son of Nun was full of the spirit of wisdom, for Moses had placed his hands on him; and the Israelites listened to him and did just what the LORD had commanded Moses. **10** No prophet ever again arose in Israel like Moses, who knew the LORD face to face. **11** He did all the signs and wonders the LORD had sent him to do in the land of Egypt, to Pharaoh, all his servants, and the whole land, **12** and he displayed great power and awesome might in view of all Israel.